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Memes, Args And Viral Videos: Spreadable Media, Participatory Culture, And Composition Pedagogy

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**MEMES, ARGS AND VIRAL VIDEOS: SPREADABLE MEDIA,
PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY**

by

MARY KARCHER

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

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Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

To my children Ruth, Anna, Noah and John who have inspired me and supported me throughout this dissertation, and who continue to do so every day.

To my husband Brian, who motivated me to start this adventure, who has been so patient, understanding, and supportive throughout, and who is still with me at the end. I am always and forever yours.

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CHAPTER 1: SPREADABLE MEDIA, WPA OUTCOMES AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

This project has stemmed from my passion for both viral media and the digital participatory culture that produced this phenomenon. When I started this project, I was intrigued by what I saw as an innovative way to get students more engaged in the writing they are required to produce in a first year composition (FYC) course; however, the more I researched viral media and the participatory culture that it stemmed from, the more firmly I grew in the belief that composition instructors need to teach our students the abilities needed to be effective communicators. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that by closely looking at how viral media texts are created and circulated in online participatory communities, we can identify innovative pedagogical practices that can help foster agency and engagement in students towards their writing; inform and facilitate the achievement of the Writing Program Administrators' outcomes in a composition classroom, and support the learning of a set of participatory culture abilities (PCA) proposed by Jenkins et al. vital for our students to become successful and empowered communicators.

I have been fascinated with viral media for a long time now, ever since I first read an article about the internet sensation behind the movie *Snakes on a Plane* (*SoaP*). The article was brief and focused more on the movie's upcoming release date as opposed to the internet phenomenon itself; however, what caught my attention was the accompanying image of a mock movie poster from the *SoaP* online fan community. The poster combined fan-made elements of a typical horror movie—snakes—and the central image from the movie poster of the 1980 movie *Airplane*. Specifically my attention was drawn to the way the author of the poster had used elements from a poster for *Airplane*, a

spoof on disaster airplane movies, to evoke that same serious yet irreverent feel about the movie *Snakes on a Plane*. The author of the poster had cleverly crafted a poster made up from elements that were chosen and combined to convey a specific meaning, to evoke a specific kind of message about what s/he hoped the movie would be like (Appendix A).

After seeing this, I went looking for other *SoaP* fan-made texts, fascinated that this one small title could inspire such enthusiasm and creativity. As I kept looking, however, what I realized was that many of the fan-made creations were using the rhetorical appeals I was trying to teach in my composition courses. Many of the fan-made viral media texts exhibited audience awareness, constructive peer collaboration, advanced research skills, in fact almost all of the abilities valued by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) and laid out as goals for First Year Composition (FYC) classes in the WPA outcomes statement (WPA OS). It seemed that there was something about viral media that was inspiring people to craft texts for fun that were utilizing a surprising amount of the same abilities that we as composition teachers are endeavoring to teach and foster in our students.

The term “viral media” describes the Internet phenomenon where a text, usually a picture or a short YouTube video, is widely circulated around the Internet. What is frequently passed on is a direct copy of the text received, although there are some types of viral media where the original text is in some way creatively altered before it is passed on. Whether altered or not, the text is passed on from one person to the next, often very quickly and in vast numbers, mimicking in many respects the spread of a virus; hence the name. Sometimes the text is spread so widely and so quickly that it is often referred to as a viral media epidemic (Gladwell).

What typifies the phenomenon of viral media is the way that it captures the attention and interest of people to such a degree that they feel compelled to react in some way—to share what they have found with others, or to create texts of their own inspired by the original, or even to seek out communities of others online who feel the same engagement and passion for the text that they do. For example, a picture of Tiger Wood golfing sparked the viral media epidemic that is now known as the ‘Cigar Guy meme’.¹ The picture in question showed Tiger Woods swinging his golf club, the photo being snapped right as the golf ball was heading towards the photographer. The image itself is being hailed as an “instant classic” among sports photographers, but what caught the imagination of the public was a man, now referred to as ‘Cigar Guy’, in the background dressed up like golfer Miguel Angel Jimenez, himself well known for wearing his long hair in a ponytail and for his love of smoking cigars (“Amazing”). By the next day, creative images of Cigar Guy’s face were all over the internet photoshopped onto everything from classic sports photographs to famous music album covers, to even famous historical pictures (Hathaway; Rothman). Within three days, news coverage of the Cigar Guy viral media epidemic was worldwide. Within three weeks, not only had Cigar Guy been identified and interviewed on the Today show, but Yahoo! declared Cigar Guy was the most searched costume idea for Halloween 2010 (Inbar; Cosel). Clearly viral media strikes a chord within online audiences worldwide, eliciting an active response of some kind from the millions of those who come in contact with them.

¹ A meme is defined as an “element of a culture”—for example an idea, a melody, or in this case an image—that is transmitted from one person to another through imitation or any other non-genetic manner (Dictionaries).

Two circumstances are necessary for viral media to exist. First, the viral media text in question must be posted in a online, digital environment. Second, individuals who receive the viral media text must be part of a larger community of people networked via social media. In other words, online and digital technology and a large community connected via social media are critical conditions for any digital text to ‘go viral.’ These conditions may be easily overlooked, primarily because these two elements are so ubiquitous in American culture; however, I foreground them precisely because it is easy to forget that not long ago these conditions did not exist as we know them now.

The lack of available critical terminology to discuss this phenomenon is evidence of both cultural and scholarly forgetfulness. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson pointed out that we need to be critical about the metaphors we use because they can shape and even limit our perceptions of the item in question in subtle but powerful ways (Lakoff and Johnson). The term “viral” seems to imply that something is passively passed on from an unwittingly “infected carrier” to another unwitting person, implying that some other force, be it from within the viral entity itself, or outside both the “carrier” and the viral entity, is controlling what gets passed on, how, and to whom. In short, the metaphor “viral” implies lack of human agency, and grants autonomy to the ‘viral’ text. Such lack of human agency is not at all what I saw happening in the *SoaP* fan community or any subsequent online communities that surround the various viral media events that I have researched. Rather, I saw people exercising deliberate agency in how they responded to the viral media events, even in those who simply passed on the viral text “as-is” to their friends.

I am not alone in my frustration with the inaccuracy and limitations of the metaphor “viral”. Many Business theorists and New Media scholars alike have expressed critical concern at the use of this term (Cf. Askwith; Caddell; Chapman; Larkin). One New Media scholar in particular, Henry Jenkins, has argued that the viral metaphor, which brings with it implications of ‘contamination’ and ‘infection’, “overestimates the power of media companies and underestimates the agency of audiences” (Jenkins, Ford and Green 21). In this 2013 book, Jenkins offers an alternative term for the problematic viral metaphor—spreadable media. Deriving “spreadability” from “stickiness”, a metaphor used to talk about online business success, Jenkins hopes to tap into the implications that stickiness suggests when referring to “the need to create content that attracts audience attention and engagement” while at the same time shifting the idea of viral media from being passively “distributed” by an external force, to one of being actively “circulated” by those who encounter and willingly participate in viral media phenomena (Jenkins, Ford and Green 4). For Jenkins, this renaming is a deliberate move to foreground the active engagement of those individuals that encounter and then pass on a viral text. “Spreadable media” represents more accurately what I saw going on in the *SoaP* phenomenon; an idea deliberately passed on from person to person, and at each step being acted upon and personalized by the individual user. To emphasize this shift of agency from texts to authors and audiences, in this dissertation I will use the term “spreadable media” instead of “viral media,” and the term “spreadable media event” instead of “viral media epidemic.”

The term “agency” is worthy of a brief definition and explanation here. In a general sense, agency is understood as the capacity of the individual to act (Werder). As

far back as Aristotle, rhetorical agency was understood as the individual pursuing an intention to persuade (Greer; Geisler); however, since the post-modern critique of the autonomous agent, the definition of rhetorical agency has been expanded through scholarly discussion to include recognition of a broad range of non-traditional elements and experiences, from such things as sexual and gender identity, to the impact of technology and media (Geisler; Ranney; Werder). Rhetorical agency then, as it is understood in the present, is “the potential for effecting change based on the extent to which the collective resources, titles, and expertise of a particular situation are made available for the individual and common good” (Werder 12). One aspect of rhetorical agency that is particularly salient to this dissertation is its ability to impact the shape of a culture, primarily “within the communication practices of a given community of discourse” (Greer).

The term “spreadable media”, while a more accurate description of this cultural phenomenon as a whole, still does not provide enough specific terminology to talk about the types of texts that circulate during such an event. For example, existing scholarship provides no critical differentiation between the spreadable media that were altered before they were passed on, and the spreadable media that were passed on “as-is”. My research suggests that both types elicit the same level of engagement, but the first type seems to elicit the most creativity. The majority of scholarship on spreadable media tends to conflate the two types, making no real distinction between the two, let alone providing a vocabulary to do so. For his part, Jenkins did identify the same two types I saw; nevertheless, he chose to conflate them in his study of author and audience agency. As a result, he ignored the very real difference in motivation among those who pass on the

spreadable media texts “as-is” and those who alter the text in some way first. To add even more complexity to the situation, my research showed yet a third type—spreadable media created “from scratch,” what we might provisionally call “originating” texts—based on the central meme or spreadable media event.

To summarize and clarify, my research shows that there are three types of spreadable media texts that are circulated: those created “from scratch” i.e. originating texts, those that are physically altered before they are passed on; and those that are passed on “as-is”. By way of illustration, let’s return to the *SoaP* spreadable media event. Appendix B.1 is an example of the first type, an originating, “from-scratch” text. This text was the first in a series of similar Photoshopped texts, initially put up on a website *Snakes on a Blog* devoted to collecting texts and articles surrounding the *SoaP* spreadable media event (Finkelstein). Appendix B.2 and B.3 are examples of the second type, those that are altered physically in some way before they are passed on. The third and last type consists of those texts that are passed on to other individuals unaltered, or “as-is”. Considering the dearth of specific vocabulary that focuses on the different groups of texts that occur within a spreadable media event, I propose a type scheme based on the extent or variety of agency we may attribute to those who circulate them.

Spreadable media texts that are made “from scratch” provide the most obviously identifiable form of agency. Though no text or artifact can be genuinely original, some texts can be identified as a starting point from which others are drawn. Originating texts take elements from the spreadable media event, combining them with other elements from within or without the event, and turn them into a ‘new’ text, sometimes translating

them into a new medium as well, e.g. from a video to a static image. The ‘author’, once among the audience, has deliberately composed something that is new².

Altered texts are clearly and deliberately based off of an originating text, altering the text to some purpose. Images B.2 and B.3 are clearly iterations of B.1. Altered texts can be taken from one medium to another, but tend to stay in the original medium because only a small element is altered or made ‘anew’. Nevertheless, altered images reveal agency through the individual’s respond to the originating text and compose an altered text with an altered purpose.

Texts that are passed on “as-is” also demonstrate agency, though of a “limited” variety. An as-is text is adapted for use toward a different intention or purpose. In terms of the spreadable media event, this limited agency is crucial. Jenkins and others have pointed out that ‘viral’ implies lack of agency on the part of those who participate in a ‘viral media event’. I want to recognize and emphasize that even when spreadable media texts are passed on physically unaltered, when they are passed on as-is but repurposed, the participant has exerted agency over their interpretation and intention. Pushing the “forward” button on an email or re-tweeting a post from twitter may seem passive, but this is actually agency in action; agency over the purpose and reason for the texts’ usage, if not over the actual material elements of the text.

I recognize that the distinctions among the three types are not as clear-cut as my divisions may make them seem. Appendix B.1, though I have classified it as an originating text, contains a “premade” picture of Samuel L. Jackson, obviously part of a

² I use the term ‘new’ here with the understanding that in a post-modern culture it is generally understood that nothing is really new, merely represented in a unique and different way.

licensed photograph from the movie company. So alternatively, I might say that Appendix B.1 is an altered text. The point here is that the three types I have identified are complex, and the divisions are not as clear-cut as my descriptions may suggest; however, I offer my terms “originating”, “altered” and “as-is” as placeholders for the purposes of my research, as a way to offer a place to begin to analyze these texts that take part in spreadable media events.

Not much research on spreadable media has been done in the field of Education, and what little research there is has to do with either teaching students how to make ‘viral’ videos (Cf. Leopold; Payne et al.), how teachers can use a ‘viral’ model to spread and pass on teacher resources and materials to the larger teaching community (Hickey), or how a university program can use a ‘viral’ model to recruit and organize faculty from diverse departments to teach in a digital media program (O’Gorman). Some emerging literature in media studies looks at the impact spreadable media is having on political debate (Cf. Vernallis; Spierings and Jacobs), and on perceptions of various cultural identities (Cf. Kopacz and Lawton; Malin). The field that has been most active in doing research on spreadable media, however, is marketing.

In the marketing field, researchers have tried to determine what induces people to ‘pass on’ something, with a view to identifying some key criteria that make a good ‘viral marketing’ campaign (Cf. Akar and Topcu; Dobeles, Toleman and Beverland; Graham and Havlena). Marketing scholars Adam Lindgreen and Joele Vanhamme concluded that a key element to success in these campaigns is the emotion of surprise (Lindgreen and Vanhamme). Lindgreen and Vanhamme define surprise as that emotion that occurs when something happens that is outside of our personal schema of the world, i.e. when this

event or object doesn't match the way we view the world. Angela Dobele et al, take this key element of surprise a step further (Dobele et al.). They argue that people are motivated to pass on spreadable media texts when surprise is coupled with another strong emotion, especially joy. From the research, then, spreadable media fosters strong emotions, especially surprise coupled with joy, in those who encounter a phenomenon. If the world of marketing can make use of spreadable media's potential for advertising, perhaps composition instructors can explore the potential spreadable media holds for teaching.

Consider, for example, Geoffrey Sirc's 2002 award-winning book *English Composition as a Happening*, in which he seems to be calling for composition classroom materials that generate the same strong emotions, especially surprise and joy, that the marketing researchers recommended. Indeed, spreadable media events seem to typify the kind of "happening" event that Sirc urged composition teachers to foster in their own classrooms. Specifically, Sirc challenged compositionists to explore the possibilities for their teaching offered by the practices of the 60s artistic avant-garde movement, in particular those of Happening artists such as Allen Kaprow and Robert Rauschenberg. Key to these Happenings was the involvement of the audience, where the artists "interrupted the passivity of the spectator" so that the audience too could be a "participant" in the "drama" (Sirc *Happening*). What resulted was an experience that not only would be unique every time it was performed, but also would be a "unique encounter" for every person who participated in the event (DiTolla). The Happenings movement legitimized ordinary and everyday objects and substances that might not be

recognized as suitable artistic media by the traditional art world, but that instead challenged and “dismantled” traditional ideas about what constitutes art (DiTolla).

Sirc argues compositionists need to change the way they teach writing, to move away from the “dry modernist enterprise of college writing” and to redesign what he sees as the “over determined” classroom space that lies “on the cusp between the curatorial and the commercial” (*Happening* 4). Like the Happenings artists, we must reject the rigidity and staidness of the traditional (5), to unleash students’ creativity and innovation through new materials and forms “that can produce shock and wonder” (129) in both students and in their compositions, and, “blur disciplines and boundaries, [subsuming] the whole with a life-affirming humor” (30). He advocates using both the new forms of digital materials that technology and the internet make available to us, as well as re-appropriating and re-appreciating the everyday, readymade objects and materials that surround us at all times (5).

Sirc also argues that “composition needs to penetrate to the core of human emotion” (288) and to be “very personal” and “very expressive.” To that end he suggests that the topics we choose for students to write about do not need to be “politically correct or professionally responsible” but should instead simply thrill, allowing students to express their natural enthusiasm. As Sirc explains, “the point doesn’t seem so much how we can get them to transfer that natural exuberance to their academic writing, as how we can get academic writing to restyle itself so as to better fit their exuberance” (200). What Sirc admires in the Happenings artists, and consequently challenges compositionists to foster in their classrooms—use of new and innovative forms, reclaiming and reusing the ordinary and everyday, active (vs. passive) participation of the participants, fostering the

participants “natural exuberance” and emotional involvement—all these elements are typical components of spreadable media events.

Sirc argues for the use of popular culture, especially digital texts, in the teaching and writing of composition. However, just as artists and art critics of the Happenings raised legitimate questions about the validity of using everyday objects to create art, some compositionists question why we should teach with popular culture and/or allow our students to incorporate such mass media texts in their compositions. The term ‘popular culture’ has expanded in meaning over time from those texts that stood in opposition to “high” culture, were mass produced, and were consumed predominantly by the working-class; to those texts from a variety of media that stem from the mainstream of any given culture. With the old ‘converging’ with the new, this idea of popular culture is being expanded even further to include those digital and mass media texts that have been produced, circulated and consumed by internet users as they engage in a kind of collective meaning-making process through the social media they use (Alvermann).

Scholars in the field of Education have done research on using popular culture as a pedagogical tool (Cf. Alvermann, Moon and Hagood; Berlin and Vivion; Buckingham and Sefton-Green; Pratt; Wohlwend). Steve Johnson argues that present-day popular culture is developing the mind in ways that could be utilized in our schools (Johnson). James Paul Gee and Elisabeth Hayes argue that popular culture provide students learning spaces that engage their passions, and impact the language development in ways that formal learning does not (2011). Gee takes the idea of “passionate affinity-based learning” one step further in *The Anti-Education Era*, claiming that these informal literacies serve as scaffolding to help students’ understanding of traditional literacies.

Popular culture encompasses all forms of media; however as digital technologies have grown in ubiquity, researchers have become interested in the ways youths use popular culture texts accessible through new media (Alvermann). New media is an amorphous term because it is trying to describe technology and media that are changing so rapidly. Lev Manovich identifies eight different iterations of the term ‘new media,’ each one incorporating many elements, but none encapsulating the whole meaning (“Html”); however, generally ‘new media’ refers to texts individuals have access to in various digital formats across numerous media platforms (“New Media”). Because of new media, access to popular culture has increased dramatically, and given old popular culture texts some new audiences who either did not have access to the original texts or were not alive when the original first circulated.

Within Composition Studies interest is centering on the new and different types of literacies new media afford, and the social practices that surround them (Cf. Black; boyd; Gee *Video Games*; Kress; McPherson; Richardson; Robison). Knobel and Lankshear contend that digital compositions afford a “useful lens” on cultural production and on “literacy and literacy education” (2008 22). Manovich claims that because of social media tools, there has been a shift in popular culture texts people consume from texts generated by mass media companies to texts generated by amateurs. Manovich also urges that educators look more closely at how this shift impacts student literacies, and potentially discover new ways for learning and teaching (Manovich “Practice”).

Increasing numbers of researchers are stressing the importance of the social aspect involved in both creating and disseminating these texts (Cf. Gee *Situated*; Knobel; Lewis). Sonia Livingstone insists that examining these new literacies is not enough; we

need to examine the social practices needed to navigate the networked communities in which these texts circulate (2008). Harold Rheingold argues that a key part of being able to create new media texts is “active only when the power is accompanied by the new social skills that apply to networked publics” and students also “need to know how to behave in an online community, grow a personal learning network, and ethically share cultural productions” (“Stewards of Digital Literacies” 53). Researchers are making a case to study digital popular culture texts for the new literacies they afford, and the social practices in which these texts are created and circulated.

Clearly there is a place for studying pop culture that both engages youth and potentially offers new literacies. Spreadable media falls at this intersection because it is concerned with all elements of culture, culture being defined as the characteristics of a group of people, including everything from ideas, social customs, art, dress, indeed any “manifestation of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” (Zimmermann). More specifically, popular culture, i.e. “the products and forms of expression and identity that are commonly liked or approved, and characteristic of a particular society at a given time” (Delaney), is the focus of most spreadable media because popular culture is what most people have in common. By looking at Spreadable media, both the content and the social skills involved, we can harness students’ ‘exuberance’ that often accompanies popular culture texts, but in such a way that does not endanger the rhetorical knowledge we want them to achieve.

Sirc’s struggle to respond to the growing ubiquity of new media is not new in the history of composition. Anne Wysocki points out that, more than ten years ago, research existed that talks about opening up composition classrooms to new media (Wysocki et

al.). The research Wysocki referred to, and that in 2004 was gaining traction, studied the potential that new media and digital writing had for composition, and how composition teachers could harness new media in their teaching (Cf. Bolter; Bolter and Grusin; Janangelo; Kress; Hawisher Selfe; Hayles; Self “Technology”).

A “back to basics” approach in the literature, typified by Judith Wooten in her College Composition and Communications Conference Chair address in 2006, effectively stated that composition teachers should not be so concerned about digital media, and instead refocus on teaching traditional literacies. Wooten argued that new media-focused teachers ‘become blind to’ the need for students to communicate effectively and persuasively in whatever media they communicate in (Wooten). This and similar arguments were probably fueled by such output as that from the New Media Consortium, an international, non-profit organization dedicated to exploring the use of new media in education. Trying to identify necessary new media literacy skills, the New Media Consortium defined 21st century literacy as

The set of abilities and skills where aural, visual and digital literacy overlap. These include the ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognize and use that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to distribute them persuasively, and to easily adapt them to new forms (2005 2)

Although I doubt the New Media Consortium would deny the value of traditional reading and writing skills, their definition does not consider traditional alphabetic literacies, and the omission is telling. My summary over simplifies this debate; however, it highlights the uneasy position of composition teachers, understanding the foundational importance of traditional, alphabetic literacies, and yet recognizing the growing importance of digital and new media literacies for their students. This debate took place ten years ago;

however, traces of these viewpoints linger in the present day approaches to writing and technology.

Any pedagogical approach to composition that we advocate should promote alphabetic literacies, and digital and new media literacies equally. It should also foreground the social contexts that surround any text created, be it in a print or digital setting. Even when writing so called “single author” papers, students do not work in isolation; Composition scholarship has long recognized the role of collaboration and the social context in writing. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, Kenneth Bruffee published his article “Collaborative Learning and the “Conversation of Mankind” (1984), and John Trimbur his article “Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning” (1989). In 1990 Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede published *Singular Text/Plural Authors*; Ann Ruggles Gere penned *Writing Groups*; and Karen Burke LeFevre wrote *Invention as a Social Action* (1987). From the mid 1990s and 2000s, research on the role of the social in writing looked at the impact of technology on writing, collaboration, and the social context, with such articles published as Cynthia Selfe’s “Computer-Based Conversations and the Changing Nature of Collaboration” (1992); Mark Warschauer’s “Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning” (1997), and Ann Hill Duin’s “Computer-Supported Collaborative Writing” (1991) to note but a few. More recently, scholars interested in writing and the role of collaboration and social contexts have begun to explore a concept that I find useful: participatory culture.

New Media scholar Henry Jenkins coined the term “participatory culture” in his 1992 book, *Textual Poachers*. According to Jenkins, a ‘participatory culture’ is one in which members understand and employ the “agency” of being co-inventors and co-

architects of their culture, and are not docile receivers of the culture that others have created. This means that those who feel part of that culture participate by creating texts that are then used by, and circulated in, that community. A participatory culture is also one in which the members engage in sharing and collecting material, and in collaborating with other members in the community. Members feel a sense of collaborative agency to not just passively consume cultural material, but to create and archive it for the consumption of others and themselves.

When Jenkins identified participatory cultures in the early 90s, the digital environment as it now stands did not exist. Over time, as digital culture has emerged, there has been a significant growth in the size and scope of contemporary participatory cultures, both within fan communities and without (Rose). With the increased access to digital and online technology, connecting and forming communities is relatively easy. Members of these communities can create and share sophisticated and multi-modal texts in ways they could not before. Although participatory culture was present before computers and the internet, our present digital age is what makes participatory culture as significant and pervasive as it is today.

Jenkins began research into how education can be supplemented to facilitate students learning how to be contributing members of such online communities. Aware, however, that inequalities in access to, and competencies with, technology are often carried over from “the physical world into online spaces,” Jenkins and several of his colleagues co-authored the report entitled *Challenges of Participatory Culture* (2009) put out by the McArthur Foundation. This report was intended to begin the work of helping educational institutions to bridge the “digital divide” and to take steps towards helping all

students to become empowered and democratic participants in any given new media environment, fan-based or otherwise (Rose).

Jenkins et al.'s report referenced an increasing body of research that identifies not just the impact, but also the potential benefits of participatory culture, and that seeks to both measure and harness that potential for learning (Jenkins et al. xii). Fields as far ranging as political science (cf. Kavada; McMillian; G. B. Walker), sociology (cf. Beer and Burrows; Billett, Barker and Hernon-Tinning; Dena), communication (cf. Enli; Johnson, Salvo and Zoetewey; Punathambekar), media and culture studies (cf. Carter and Arroyo; Gurney; Lee; Shefrin; Zoettl), literature (cf. Barrington; Poore; Voigts-Virchow) and library science (cf. Coatney; Hamilton; Loertscher and Koechlin; McShane; Plemmons) were interested in employee communication and peer collaboration within companies, as well as a diversification of cultural expression and a more empowered understanding of citizenship. What ultimately captured my attention with respect to participatory culture was that so many of the spreadable media texts circulating in online communities were demonstrating abilities that the WPA OS encourages compositionists to promote in our classrooms and our curricula. As I take a closer look at my spreadable media case studies, I will be using the WPA OS as a lens through which to view these texts to determine what rhetorical strategies are apparent.

The WPA first adopted the WPA outcomes statement (WPA OS) in 2000, a document that resulted from a conversation begun in 1997 among a group of faculty on the listserv WPA-L (Dryer et al.). This group, known as the Outcomes Collective, was theorizing about creating a common set of outcomes for the various versions of FYC courses in postsecondary educational institutions. Since 2000 and the WPA's adoption of

the initial outcomes statement, now thought of as version 1.0, the outcomes statement has been revised two subsequent times, first in 2008 (Statement 2.0), and then again in 2014 (Statement 3.0) (Dryer et al.). The overall intent and structure of the original version of the WPA OS, Statement 1.0, has been preserved throughout the two subsequent iterations of the WPA OS; however, there have been several revisions that reflect the developing nature of composition research and scholarship.

The only significant revision from Statement 1.0 to Statement 2.0 was the inclusion of a fifth plank, a section of outcomes entitled Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE). In statement 1.0 there was no specific mention of technology, the authors deciding to take a wait and see position. The inclusion of the fifth plank in 2008 was made to reflect the rising ubiquity in digital composing. The main revision from Statement 2.0 to Statement 3.0, adopted in 2014, again involved the CIEE section; however for this revision the criteria in this section were subsumed into the rest of the document. This revision was made to recognize that “complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies...and digital technologies are changing writers’ relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways” (Dryer et al. 137-38). As such, the Outcomes Collective removed the CIEE section and integrated them into the other four sections, foregrounding the relevant ways that technology impacts each section.

The three other revisions that were made from Statement 2.0 to Statement 3.0 were smaller in comparison, but nonetheless pertinent. A brief definition and explanation of each of the four main planks was included at the beginning of each section. Secondly, a deliberate effort was made to foreground the importance of intellectual property issues.

Although this no doubt a reflection of the increased role of technology, nothing was mentioned about intellectual property in the CIEE section in v2.0, or throughout the entirety of the first two iterations of the WPA OS, which makes its inclusion in Statement 3.0 all the more significant. The third revision was the changing of a key word in the Processes plank criterion from “*Understand* the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” in v2.0 to “*Experience* the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” in v3.0 (emphases added).

This last change was made to reduce the focus on “the social and collaborative aspects of writing” in the original statement. This came about because researchers surveyed in the process of drafting Statement 3.0 “had conceded that neither they nor students were likely ever to fully ‘understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes’” (Dryer et al. 137). Although it may still be hard to “fully understand” the social and collaborative facets of writing, in my opinion being able to understand and critically think through these aspects of the process of writing are becoming more important in digital and online environments, not less. I do not wish to imply that the Outcomes Collective feel that the social and collaborative aspects of writing are diminishing in light of digital technology. Rather, I feel the Outcomes Collective’s change to this criterion is a recognition of the complexity of this issue, and of the difficulty in critically thinking and teaching about the social and collaborative aspects of the writing process, something made all the more difficult when viewed in light of digital and online environments. It is my suggestion that Participatory Culture skills can help us address this problem in the WPA OS.

Jenkins and his colleagues outlined in 2009 a set of 11 ‘skills’ that they feel students need to become empowered communicators and citizens in today’s participatory culture. Although Jenkins coined the term “participatory culture” in his earlier work, in the 2009 report, Jenkins and his colleagues update the definition, giving particular emphasis to the role of what they call social skills (what we might rather call rhetorical abilities) that participatory cultures foster through networking and collaboration. They claim that a participatory culture is:

A culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices. In a participatory culture, members also believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least, members care about others’ opinions of what they have created.)

The eleven “skills” that Jenkins et al. identified and defined appear in Appendix C.

The term ‘skills’ has a contested history in the field of Composition. The problem focuses around the idea that, prior to the 1970s and early 1980s, composition instruction focused on teaching students to produce a finished product, one that mimicked what was believed to be ‘good writing’. Such a ‘product’ was thought to be achieved by having students master a series of writing skills taught in isolation, such as through a series of linguistic and grammatical drills (Steel). This style of teaching writing had been in practice since before the seventeenth century (Cf. Cooper and Odell; Flower and Hayes "Problem") In the 70s and early 80s, research in writing took a turn towards exploring writing as a cognitive process as opposed to a finite product. This process was believed to be developed, not through ‘drills and skills’ but through a cyclical, individualized, process of writing, involving such steps in the process as brain-storming, pre-writing, and

multiple drafts (Cf. Flower and Hayes "Cognitive"; Murray) Since this advent of the Process movement in writing, the term 'skills' is fraught with disciplinary tension. Because the report produced by Jenkins et al was aimed at education in general, the authors did not have such an issue with the word 'skills', and were comfortable using this term. In recognition of the tension in Composition Studies in regards to the term 'skills', for the purposes of this dissertation I will use the term 'abilities' instead, a word Jenkins et al use predominantly throughout the report and even in several of the term definitions themselves. Consequently, for the purposes of this dissertation, discussions involving Jenkins et al's set of Participatory Culture Skills will instead be referred to as Participatory Culture Abilities (PCA).

In my examination of spreadable media texts and the participatory cultures in which they circulate, I will be bringing together the WPA outcome statement (WPA OS) (see Appendix D) and Jenkins et al's Participatory Culture Abilities (PCA) (see Appendix C) to form a lens through which to explore what I see in my case studies. In regards to the WPA OS, I will be specifically using statement 2.0 because it lays out explicitly the criteria of the 5th plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE). Even though all the texts I will be examining are circulated, if not created, in an electronic environment, the explicit itemization of criteria is easier to discuss, rather than the indirect references dispersed throughout the WPA OS as found in the 2014 Statement 3.

The WPA OS and the PCAs work well together because the PCA can help address the social context of creating and circulating texts in participatory cultures that the WPA OS is struggling to address. Jenkins et al emphasize the importance of traditional, alphabetic literacy skills even as they advocate the teaching of digital and new

media literacies. At the heart of the PCA is the clear understanding that “new media literacies include the traditional literacies that evolved with print culture as well as the new forms of literacy within mass media and digital media” (29). Jenkins et al. “fundamentally disagree” with the idea that new media literacies should “displace” more traditional literacies, recognizing that these new digital cultures can “provide support systems to help youths improve their core competencies as readers and writers” and that “youths must expand their required competencies, not push aside old skills to make room for new ones” (29). This is particularly important when we keep in mind the lingering tensions between those Compositionists who align more with Sirc and the New Consortium who promote the importance of digital literacies, and those who align more with Wootten who promotes the importance of alphabetic literacies. By combining the WPA OS, with its emphasis on alphabetic literacies while still trying to include the digital, and the PCAs, with its emphasis on digital literacies while still trying to include alphabetic, these two systems seem to compliment each other well in terms of theory.

Interestingly enough, the two systems are strikingly parallel. The terminology is slightly different, and there are items in each list that do not apply to the other, for example, the WPA outcome statement talks about competency with grammar and spelling, something not specifically addressed in the participatory culture abilities. Yet the WPA OS and the PCA share many points of intersection. Indeed, the WPA OS actually encompasses the PCAs, as Appendix E shows. Here, I will briefly mention the PCAs, and give an overview of how these eleven PCAs facilitate the WPA OS and the writing process in general.

The PCAs Play, Simulation and Performance aid in the writing process though facilitating idea generation, foregrounding different rhetorical strategies, and promoting the crafting of multiple drafts. They also promote the idea that the writing process is open-ended, one that can be returned to and revised. When individuals engage in Appropriation, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation, they are exploring how their ideas relate to and connect with those of others through searching out and referencing primary and secondary resources. These six PCAs are essentially accomplished by individuals independently researching and composing texts. When students are engaged in electronic online environments, however, participatory communities continuously surround them. Instead of solitary researchers digging through card catalogues, now individuals need to navigate not only online databases and digital archives, but also Internet communities who generate and archive information. This is where the PCAs of Networking and Negotiation come in, and where the WPA OS criterion “understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” can be emphasized and expanded. Networking and Negotiation are the social elements needed when research takes place in digitally linked communities, especially when connected through social media. They help develop individuals mindful of multicultural diversity, and of the “relationships among language, knowledge, and power” (CWPA).

Whereas Networking and Negotiation foreground the social aspects of writing processes, Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition and Judgment foreground the collaborative aspects. These three PCAs are the collaborative equivalent of Appropriation, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation, in essence accomplishing the same goals but collaboratively. Whereas the prior three PCAs are used in the context of

the independent researcher, Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, and Judgment are used in the context of collaborative and group research. In both cases, however, Networking and Negotiation are needed as the “social glue” or interpersonal group-oriented social abilities needed to function in online group environments. And as with all the PCAs that Jenkins et al. identified, the WPA OS encompasses these abilities throughout the five planks Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing; Processes; Knowledge of Conventions; and Composing in Electronic Environments.

Understanding that the WPA OS has embedded within it all eleven of the PCAs, I will use the WPA OS combined with the PCAs to examine three types of spreadable media—Spreadable Media Events, Fanworks, and Alternate Reality Games (ARGs)—and how texts are composed, consumed and distributed within participatory culture. In chapter two I explore Spreadable Media Events (SMEs), and show how the WPA OS plank of Rhetorical Knowledge and one criterion of the plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE) are evidenced in SMEs, along with the PCAs Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance. In chapter three I will examine Fanworks, and show how the WPA OS planks of Knowledge of Convention and Processes and one criterion of the plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE) are evidenced in Fanworks, along with the PCAs of Appropriation and Negotiation. In chapter four I will examine Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) and show how the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing and one criterion of the plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE) are evidenced in ARGs, along with the PCAs of Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play, and Simulation. In

chapter five I discuss the implications of my findings for composition pedagogy, along with questions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE IN SPREADABLE MEDIA EVENTS

News of a movie with a kooky title captures people's imaginations, and soon the Internet is flooded with digital texts about what the movie might entail, causing the movie's production company to start a potentially new approach to Hollywood filmmaking. Fans of a trilogy of video games are unhappy with how the game company ended the series and turn to the Internet to express their frustration through a slew of digital texts, forcing the gaming world to not only question how video games are made, but even the power and place of artistic control. A presidential candidate makes a slip of the tongue in a televised political debate and soon his faux pas is the inspiration for a myriad of online digital texts promoting public ridicule and political action. These are but three examples of a type of participatory culture activities, which I am calling Spreadable Media Events (SMEs), an activity that also includes the Cigar man phenomena referenced in the first chapter.

Spreadable Media Events

For a series of spreadable media to be called an SME, I argue that it must meet four criteria, which are derived from Limor Shifman's definition of an Internet meme in *Memes in Digital Culture*. One assumption Shifman makes is that a meme can be comprised of several "memetic dimensions," or rather several different elements that people could potentially imitate. The other assumption Shifman makes is that a meme is not one solitary text or unit that is circulated, but rather is "a group of content units with common characteristics" (ch. 4, par. 5). Based on these assumptions then, Shifman defines an Internet meme as "(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and

(c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users” (Ch. 4, par. 8).

There are many forms of spreadable media that circulate the Internet the way that Shifman describes; however, the ones I am calling SMEs are those that couple Shifman’s criteria with both speed and breadth of circulation. So for the purposes of this dissertation, an SME is defined as (a) a group of digital texts that share common characteristics of content, which (b) were created with an awareness of each other, (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users and (d) that spread throughout the Internet very rapidly and very widely.

Without the existence of participatory culture, arguably made possible by the social media that the modern iteration of participatory culture has come to be dependent on, SMEs could not exist. As already mentioned, a participatory culture involves three elements: active and empowered participants who (a) create and circulate the cultural materials that they consume; (b) collaborate with other members within the community; and (c) archive cultural material for the consumption of others as well as themselves. Although SMEs exhibit all three of these, the primary activity in an SME is the creation and circulation of texts, with archiving materials as a distant second activity. Although there is collaboration within an online community seen in SMEs, the responses of individuals tend to be more prevalent than the collaboration among the community as a whole. The other activity that is more prevalent in SMEs than in the other participatory culture activities is that of circulating altered texts. A defining criterion of an SME is the speed and breadth with which the SME material circulates online, and the passing on of altered texts is key to how that is accomplished.

Current research into SMEs focuses on their political potential, and even then as only a small component of social media and participatory culture in general. In *Here Comes Everybody*, Clay Shirky looks at how social media and participatory culture, including SMEs, have led to political action, giving examples of minority or victimized communities that have used social media and participatory culture to form grass-roots campaigns to mobilize people to take action against their perceived oppressors. Those scholars who do focus more specifically on SMEs still tend to emphasize their political potential. Karine Nahon and Jeff Hemsley in *Going Viral* looked at how viral topics circulate and impact social structure and political power within those structures. Shifman in *Memes in Digital Culture* looks more generally at spreadable media, what he calls Internet memes, and in so doing pays more attention to SMEs specifically; however, Shifman devotes much attention to what he calls political memes, “a new amalgamation of cute cat [images] and hard-core politics” (Ch. 8, par. 1), as well as deriving many of his examples from spreadable media generated around political commentary, thus emphasizing the political impact of those SMEs.

Not much work has been done with SMEs specifically in the field of Composition. Greg Kessler, in his article “Teaching ESL/EFL in a World of Social Media, Mash-Ups, and Hyper-Collaboration,” explores the potential that spreadable media has for teaching English to second language learners specifically, but not first year composition students in general. In “Towards Social Based Writing,” John Sadauskas, Daragh Byrne and Robert Atkins advocate the design of new technologies to actively utilize those writing tools found in social media, such as peer review and guided prewriting, with the intent of improving student writing; however, Sadauskas, Byrne and Atkins focus more on the

design of the technology rather than on writing abilities. What work is being done, however, is at the level of classroom assignments. On the Bedford/St Martin blog site, several Composition scholars have posted a description of their favorite assignment using spreadable media and SMEs that range from using spreadable media as rhetorical analysis prompts (Barrios; Winchell), to creating visual arguments in the form of spreadable media (Gardner). So compositionists are starting to recognize the pedagogical potential of SMEs, but work is still in the beginning stages.

When viewed through the lens of the WPA Outcome Statement (WPA OS), participants in SMEs make obvious use of the plank Rhetorical Knowledge, which composition students need to be able to exercise when examining and analyzing various contexts and audiences, and then use that investigation to help them understand and construct rhetorically effective texts of their own. Students need to be aware of such elements of writing as purpose, audience, rhetorical situation and contexts and the impact genres have on texts, as well as understand the need to adopt an appropriate tone and voice depending on the text and rhetorical purpose they are trying to communicate (CWPA).

The Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs) that SMEs primarily encompass are Transmedia Navigation, Performance, and Multitasking. Although explored in more detail later on how they pertain to SMEs, a general description of these abilities would be useful here³. Transmedia Navigation focuses on the capacity to monitor the flow of information and narratives across numerous modalities. Performance involves the ability to take on alternative identities for the purpose of discovery and improvisation. And

³ Please refer to Appendix E for a more detailed explanation of how these PCAs are encompassed in the WPA OS as a whole.

Multitasking deals with the capacity to survey the environment and switch focus to pertinent details (Jenkins et al.).

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the movie *Snakes on a Plane (SoaP)* and the SME surrounding it, arguing that the activities of its participants demonstrate Rhetorical Knowledge as defined by the WPA Outcomes Statement. To do so I concentrate on the PCAs Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking, and Performance described by Jenkins et al., which I argue take place both in the event as a whole, and also on a smaller level as demonstrated by examples of individual actions that achieved their initiators' rhetorical goals. I begin with a detailed description of the *SoaP* SME, and then explain how the abilities of Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking, and Performance demonstrate Rhetorical Knowledge. To demonstrate that the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge is evidenced in SMEs in general, I also briefly draw on two other SMEs: the SMEs surrounding the video game *Mass Effect 3*, which resulted in gamers persuading the ME3 publishers to release a different ending to ME3; and the SME surrounding Mitt Romney's comment during a 2012 presidential debate that he had "whole binders full of women," which led Americans to voice their political outrage at Romney's faux pas. I conclude that SMEs serve as a scaffold for participants to engage in activities anticipated by the WPA OS and in PCAs, a scaffold that also allows individuals to express new ideas through their own sphere of interest and expertise.

Snakes on a Plane as a Spreadable Media Event

On Wednesday, August 17th, 2005, Hollywood screenwriter Josh Friedman posted a blog entry that would start a SME so cataclysmic that it produced shockwaves that shook the Internet community, and rocked both mainstream media and the American film

industry. The post was innocent enough; it revolves around Freidman's struggle with a film company he had recently stopped working for. A few months prior, Freidman had heard of a new low-budget, b-movie horror film New Line Cinema was developing, *Snakes on a Plane*, and he had begged his agent to get him the job as script editor. The film's plot was simple; a witness to a mob hit boards a plane on his way to testify at the killer's trial. To 'silence' the witness, the mafia rigged the airplane to release hundreds of lethal snakes while in flight. What caught Friedman's attention, however, was the film's title. "It's a title. It's a concept. It's a poster and a logline and whatever else you need it to be. It's perfect. Perfect. It's the Everlasting Gobstopper of movie titles" (Friedman). Freidman got the job, but when New Line decided to change the title to *Pacific Air 121*, Friedman quit, claiming that an essential criterion of the film's appeal was its original title.

In the blog post, Friedman noted an article that stated Samuel L Jackson had signed on to star in the movie, but only if the original title was reinstated. Supposedly Jackson said, "We're totally changing that back. That's the only reason I took the job: I read the title" (C. Staff 2005). After reading that someone with Jackson's clout was set on the title, Friedman knew that the title was safe. Friedman ended his post by remarking that the phrase 'snakes on a plane' served as a perfect substitution for the catchphrase "shit happens," a phrase often used to express frustration at a person's inability to control some situations in life.

Friedman's blog post was read by a few Internet users, and the idea of 'snakes on a plane' captured their hearts and their imaginations. Within a few days of posting, the blog post garnered over 250 comments, a feat even more amazing when considering the

fact that this was only the third blog post Freidman had ever made. Within a week, the phrase “snakes on a plane” had already entered the general popular culture lexicon to the point where it was defined in Urban Dictionary, and later was chosen as Urban Word of the Day on the day the film was released (Heffernan). Gathering popularity and momentum quickly in a way that is only possible through social media, the internet was flooded with blogposts, podcasts, fake trailers, posters, YouTube movie parodies, artwork, songs, T-shirts, even scripts and audio plays all depicting what the fans thought the movie should look like. The outpouring of fan-created texts was so profuse that, by December 2005, still five months away from the official movie release date, the news media were reporting that the internet “buzz ha[d] reached epic proportions” (McNary), and dubbed *Snakes on a Plane (SoaP)* as “the movie the Internet turned into a hit long before its release” (DiGiovanna and Woodruff). A book was written by a leading entertainment journalist that purported to be “the guide to the Internet sssssssensation,” and was published a month before the movie was even released (Waldon 2006).

According to newspaper reports on the phenomenon, it was the straightforward and ‘in your face’ title, coupled with the idea of Samuel L Jackson as the star, that won the fans over. For many the title was a surprise because it was a far cry from the usual bland and somewhat vague movie titles film companies usually put out. In addition, Samuel L Jackson’s ethos provided a coolness factor that was a perfect fit with the movie. The combination of the “kooky” yet straightforward title proclaiming a simple but off-the-wall plot, coupled with a popular, ‘kick-ass’ star prompted a plethora of people “to act by themselves to express their appreciation, sight unseen, of the film’s existence” (Waldon).

What makes this SME particularly interesting is that nothing like this had ever happened before. There have been spreadable media buzz surrounding other films prior to their release, for example *The Blair Witch Project* in 1999, and the 2007 movie *Cloverfield*. The key difference between *Snakes on a Plane* and these other movies is that the internet ‘buzz’ surrounding the other movies was instigated by the marketers for those films. Those marketers deliberately created websites and fake mythologies around the films to generate interest in the online community before the films were released. The SME surrounding *Snakes on a Plane*, on the other hand, was a grass-roots phenomenon, begun and fueled purely from the online fan community. It was completely spontaneous, and driven entirely by the imagination and creativity of the Internet crowd.

It could also be argued that grass-roots fan-generated texts popping up on the Internet before the release date of a movie is not unusual either, for example those posted anticipating the release of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999) or the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* movies *Insurrection* (1998) and *Nemesis* (2002) (J. Jensen). The difference between those fan-generated texts and the *Snakes on a Plane* fan texts is that *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* are well-known franchises with large well-established fan bases; *Snakes on a Plane* was a one-off film, and had only the title and the star to generate pre-release buzz.

The large amount of fan-generated texts was not the only thing about this SME that was a movie history first. The other first is the reaction the fan response prompted from the film’s production company New Line Cinema. Usually media production companies are very strict about enforcing copyright laws, and are known for suing people who illegally use copyrighted materials, or sending the infringer a letter to “cease and

desist” their activities. This was especially true around the time of the *Snakes on a Plane* SME, which occurred only a few short years after the 2001 landmark copyright-infringement lawsuit involving Napster. Napster, founded in 1999, was one of the first peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing services (typically music files) on the Internet, which resulted in the music industry being badly damaged and in turn led to the major record labels suing Napster and getting it shut down in 2001 (Sisario). New Line, however, responded differently. Rather than retaliating or simply ignoring the hype, “[t]he producers of the thing let go of the creative reins when they saw that the blogosphere had taken it over and was telling the story differently” (Chonin). New Line producers not only tolerated, but also eventually adopted, the fans’ version of the film’s “story.”

Because of the fans’ Internet outpouring, the producers changed the name of the film back to the fan-favorite *Snakes on a Plane*. Most noteworthy, however, is the producers’ unprecedented decision to shoot an additional 5 days’ worth of additional film footage six months after shooting had finished so as to accommodate the blogosphere’s ‘telling of the story’. New Line added several popular fan elements that changed the movie from the original PG-13 rating to an R rating, including a ‘mile-high club’ scene, more gore and violence, and more ‘specific body parts’ being bitten (Waldon).

The most sought after change was to add into the script Samuel L Jackson’s notoriously favorite swear word: motherf**er. A fan audio play, based on the title that was circulating the net, had in it the line “I’ve had it with these motherf**ing snakes on this motherf**ing plane.” This line then became the *SoaP* fans’ rallying cry, generating a whole new wave of texts and documents, even shirts and wristbands with that line on it.

And sure enough, it was this very line that the producers incorporated into the script (R. Walker).

New Line also incorporated music written by the fans into the film. The producers even launched a song writing contest on March 16, 2006, the winner being featured both in the film and on the soundtrack album. Teaming up with the social networking site TagWorld, New Line posted all the entries and allowed people to vote for their favorite. In the end, after receiving over 500 song entries and thousands of votes being cast, New Line declared two winners; the band Captain Ahab for their song *Snakes on a Brain*, and a runner-up Loudon Swain for his song entitled *Here come the Snakes*, which earned the song a place on the film's soundtrack album ("TagWorld" "Tagworld and New Line Cinema Declare Two Winners for ``Snakes on a Plane" Film and Soundtrack Contest; Captain Ahab Wins Song Placement in Film and on Soundtrack; Runner-up Loudon Swain's Song to Appear on Soundtrack").

Looking at the response of the production company to the texts, ideas and interests of the fans, we can see that as a group, the *SoaP* fan base became an entity that collectively produced a rhetorically effective body of texts that reached out to the production company New Line and persuaded them to change their idea of what the movie *Snakes on a Plane* should entail. Never, in the history of the film industry, have fans been able to make a production company listen to the feedback from the internet community and incorporate changes in all the ways mentioned previously. The rhetorical impact of the fans' actions changed movie history and paved the way for a potentially new way for film companies to make movies.

For as much news media attention that the *SoaP* SME got, equal if not more news-time was spent reporting that *SoaP* was a ‘box-office bust’. Because of all the pre-release ‘buzz’ online, the expectation of the media, and New Line alike, was that the film would be a huge box office success; when looked at in light of the Internet interest, it wasn’t. Even though the film earned the #1 spot for new film releases its opening weekend, *SoaP* was declared “disappointing” because the film earned only \$15 million opening weekend, \$1 million ahead of the #2 film *Talladega Nights* (Rashbaum). Basically, the film was not able to convert “buzz to dollars” (R. Walker).

Although not strictly relevant to this thesis, the film’s apparent poor showing at the box office is worth commenting on briefly. The general perception of the *SoaP* SME held by the news media appears to be that the cultural value of the *SoaP* SME is tied to the financial success of the film. In their mind, the film ‘bombed’ financially, and so all the online activity was insignificant. As a result, in their minds, what happened carries no real cultural lesson other than at worst a cautionary tale (Otto), or at best that what makes a good internet meme is not what makes a good blockbuster movie (Chonin; R. Walker). I disagree.

To begin with, *SoaP* did actually make money, earning almost twice its \$32 million production costs with \$62 million in ticket sales worldwide. When it was released on DVD in 2007, the film earned another \$23 million in domestic sales alone. Even New Line’s president for theatrical distribution David Tuckerman admitted that New Line’s hopes and expectations had been inflated by the internet buzz (Waxman), and that the film did indeed make New Line money. Placed #16 out of 115 for gross sales earned

among horror comedy films since 1980, *SoaP* did better than average financially for the genre of film that it is (Mojo).

Even though *SoaP* did make money, its financial success is not relevant to the value the SME holds in regards to the potential spreadable media and participatory culture have for us as educators and individuals. It's not a coincidence that *TIME* chose "You" as the person of the year in 2006, the same year that the *SoaP* SME took the world by storm. By choosing "You" as their person of the year for 2006, *TIME* wanted to recognize the power and creativity of "community and collaboration" that occurred in many arenas that year (not just in the film industry) "on a scale never seen before" (Grossman). According to *TIME*, "in 2006, the World Wide Web became the tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter...[so] for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game, *TIME's* Person of the Year for 2006 is you" (Grossman).

In an article written five years after the *SoaP* SME, Spencer Kornhaber looks back at what he calls "the meme-as-movie" and reflects on the impact that SME had both for a nation and for the film industry:

The idea of an Internet meme wasn't new in 2006. But it was certainly less widely understood than it is today. And so the attention paid to *Snakes* served as a kind of coming-out for all sorts of new-millennium cultural strains: the absurd humor of the message-board masses, the way content creation had become second nature for an entire generation, ...the way lowly fans could now make enough noise for professional entertainers [to] take notice...[T]he film marked a shift in how Hollywood thought about courting its audience.

Rhetorically we can see that as a group the fans did great things, and that New Line responded. Even though *SoaP* wasn't a huge "box-office smash", it was a success from

the fans' standpoint. With the Internet and spreadable media as facilitators, the *SoaP* fans' actions had an impact at the group level and at the individual action level, both in terms of rhetorical purpose and in terms of personal expression.

Rhetorical Knowledge in Spreadable Media Events

The predominant WPA OS plank that SMEs exhibit is that of Rhetorical Knowledge. In order to take part in an SMEs, participants need to be able to analyze diverse audiences, contexts and rhetorical situations, and then “respond appropriately” to that analysis as they both comprehend and compose texts, and in this way evidence the WPA OS plank of Rhetorical Knowledge (CWPA). What makes SMEs particularly interesting is that often texts composed as part of a SME have a collective rhetorical impact. There may not have been a deliberate, collaborative (in the sense in which our field generally understands that term) purpose behind the collective reaction and participation in the *SoaP* SME. For a more strictly collaborative example, we could look to *ME3* when fans were so outraged that their collaborative efforts did persuade BioWare, the video game's producers, to create and release a different ending. Nevertheless, the *SoaP* SME did prompt New Line, the movie's production company, to go back and add in all the material that the fans had imagined they would see in the movie. New Line producers chose to act on the interest that the *SoaP* SME was generating; however, this choice stemmed from the rhetorical impact the SME as a whole had on the production company. And because of this rhetorical impact, a new chapter in the history of the movie industry was written, both because of New Line's decision to reopen shooting of the movie six months after it had finished, as well as its decision to actively seek script and audio material from the Internet fans to be used specifically in the film. Clearly the

SME participants showed their understanding of how to compose texts that “focus on a purpose,” reflect “the needs of different audiences,” and accommodate “different kinds of rhetorical situations” (CWPA).

Not all SMEs result in unprecedented, industry-changing decisions; however, all SMEs have a general, collective rhetorical impact of some kind, even if it is simply to bring attention to the funny or the incongruous. For example when Mitt Romney, during a 2012 presidential candidate debate, was questioned about the hiring process in his cabinet as governor of Massachusetts, he made the comment that he had “whole binders full of women” (Romney qtd. in Parker). For this “Binders full of Women” (BfoW) SME, the collective rhetorical purpose was to promote political satire and humor, although it also became the inspiration behind a larger political purpose to bring attention to the issue of women’s rights and pay equality to the forefront. The BfoW SME served as a catalyst for important political discussions to happen, and for people on either side of the debate to express their opinions on the subject, whether it resulted in radical social/political change or not.

Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance as WPA Outcomes

The primary PCAs utilized and developed in a SME are Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance. Although each of these is a separate, distinct ability, all three of these abilities are encompassed in the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge. (Please see Appendix E for a more detailed discussion how these PCAs are encompassed in the WPA OS as a whole). In order for individuals to display competency in these abilities, they must also have a clear understanding of Rhetorical Knowledge. Hence, evidence of these PCAs is also evidence of Rhetorical Knowledge.

Transmedia Navigation, the main PCA that is used in an SME, is the ability to trace the development of information across different media. An SME may start with a particular story or idea, but as it gains momentum the SME is carried over into different media across the Internet. In order to participate in a SME, individuals must be able to “focus on a purpose” as they navigate the different forms of media to follow the SME across multiple modalities (CWPA). Participants must also be able to understand and ‘decode’ the “conventions of format and structure” used in the various rhetorical situations the SME encompasses, as well as “understand how genres shape” the texts encountered in each of the different media (CWPA). So those who participate in a SME inevitably “must learn to sort through a range of different possible modes of expression, determine which is most effective in reaching their audience and communicating their message, and grasp which techniques work best in conveying information through this channel,” elements that Jenkins et al clearly identify as being part of Transmedia Navigation (Jenkins et al. 88). As we can see, Transmedia Navigation is evidence of Rhetorical Knowledge as the WPA OS defines it.

People who participate in a SME clearly must learn to develop their Transmedia Navigation ability. The initial spark behind the *SoaP* SME was a blog post, yet it was transformed into a myriad of different modalities. Even the simple title “Snakes on a Plane” was taken from a digitally written form and transformed into spreadable images, music lyrics, videos, etc. As the *SoaP* phenomenon grew and developed, participants had to be able to follow the flow of the developments of the story from television, to the internet and across other media outlet forms in order to synthesize the information and material so as to understand and participate. This same ability to follow and assimilate

the new details as the news story developed is also true of both the BfoW and the *ME3* SME. For BfoW, participants had to see the debate video and then ‘read’ the various responses people posted across different formats; and for *ME3* they had to react first to the game itself, then to the information posted on BioWare’s blog of the plan to redress the situation, to playing and making use of the final DLC when it was released.

Hand in hand with Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking, the “ability to scan the environment and shift focus onto salient details” is key to participation in an SME (Jenkins et al. 61). Competency in both Rhetorical Knowledge and Transmedia Navigation require individuals to have a clear purpose in mind as they navigate the flow of information across different media in any given SME, examine the different texts they encounters, and pick out the pertinent data in each case. Such an ability requires individuals to develop a “method of monitoring and responding to the sea of information around” them, all the while being focused on a clear purpose as they are inundated with data (Jenkins et al. 63). SMEs are inherently multimodal and come with a myriad of originating texts from which to draw elements to be used in the altered text. A person must therefore develop the capacity to scan various SME texts as they look for elements that will contribute meaningfully to their own altered text, and to hone in on the relevant elements.

With the *SoaP* SME, those individuals who composed the first “fake” movie posters had to engage in Multitasking as they had to figure out the title from one source, the star Samuel L. Jackson from another, and the film’s release date and production company from another. They had to collate the relevant bits of data from different sources and modalities and then synthesize them into their altered poster. The same

process is true for those participants in both the BfoW and *ME3* SMEs. The participants used the ability of Transmedia Navigation to follow the flow of the respective SMEs as they searched for material to make use of in their composing process. As the developments unfolded, they simultaneously had to use the ability of Multitasking to scan each text they encountered and then isolate pertinent details and/or elements they wished to incorporate into their altered text.

Performance, while perhaps the least prominent of these 3 PCAs, is clearly used in SMEs as role-play. Performance, as defined by Jenkins et al. is the capacity to “adopt alternate identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery” (47). The ability to role-play, i.e. the capacity to take on roles other than those one is used to adopting, is particularly important when trying to understand and be sensitive to the needs of a specific audience, an ability critical for rhetorical effectiveness as described in the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge. In SMEs, role-playing is an important practice for individuals to develop as they compose their text and trying to convey a specific message to that specific audience. Being able to ‘role-play’ the mind of their intended audience is crucial in taking part in the whole SME conversation. In addition, the “more elaborate and complex forms of role-play may also provide a point of entry into larger spheres of knowledge” (Jenkins et al. 50).

All three SMEs discussed in this chapter involved role-playing in that those who created texts needed to ‘role-play’ the mindset of their intended audience as they composed their texts. In the case of the *ME3* SME, some of the participants used the ability Performance when deciding to send cupcakes to BioWare headquarters (Thier). In a previously unrelated forum post made on BioWare’s public forum website, *ME3*’s

executive producer Casey Hudson had mentioned in passing his particular fondness for cupcakes. When thinking of how best to reach their intended audience, those involved with sending the cupcakes clearly were ‘role-playing’ Casey Hudson. In regards to Performance and its ability to provide entry into “larger spheres of knowledge,” in the case of the *SoaP* SME it raised issues in the larger sphere of how the movie industry work and questions of audience agency; in the case of the *ME3* SME, it brought up larger issues of artistic authority and how the gaming industry tells stories; and in the case of the binders SME, it provided an entry into the 2012 presidential election specifically, and the larger political arena in general.

Thus far the discussion has looked at how Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance operate on a large scale in a SME. When looking at Rhetorical Knowledge in particular, this overview approach is important to be able to see how these phenomena work collectively as larger individual events; however, SMEs are made up cumulatively of myriads of individual texts, most of which also serve as important examples of the abilities in question. For example, Brian Finkelstein is not the only individual to launch a *Snakes on a Plane* blog during the *SoaP* SME; however, his blog was launched with a clear rhetorical purpose: to get invited to the Hollywood red-carpet premiere of *SoaP* (Waldon). Unsure of the process for getting tickets to such an event, Finkelstein turned to a rhetorical situation that he was familiar with, blogging, and launched the site snakesonablog.com, recognizing that often websites are a way to gain attention from the online community as well as chronicle his goal’s progress. Finkelstein’s progress, however, was slow initially and as a result he had little to write about. “So I started picking up on stuff that was going on online, and cataloguing it, and

it just kind of grew. And as more people became interested in it, the more content there was and the more interest there was. And it kind of snowballed” (Finkelstein qtd in Waldon 15).

Making use of Transmedia Navigation, Finkelstein archived so much *SoaP* material that it became the largest and most notorious *SoaP* blog online, so much so that in the end New Line Cinema called up Finkelstein and invited him to the Hollywood premiere. New Line even flew him and a group of friends to attend the red-carpet event (Waldon). Initially started because he thought it would be “kind of fun,” Finkelstein’s engagement with the *SoaP* SME and launching of his blog led him to develop his Rhetorical Knowledge, as well as the capacity for Transmedia Navigation and Multitasking (Waldon 14).

Another *SoaP* fan also used a website to achieve his unique goal, arguably equally ambitious as Finkelstein’s. When Chris Buccella heard about *SoaP*, he had a great idea for a line of novelty T-Shirts. Working with some friends of his who owned an online retail store, Buccella had some of his T-shirts made and then set up a section of the online store’s website with pictures of several models showing off the individual shirts, all except one specific shirt: the black ‘red-letter’ version. This shirt featured the same print, but with a red ‘MF ’ in the middle of the ‘SoaP’ letters to reflect Samuel Jackson’s infamously favorite swear word. Instead of having a picture of a model, Buccella instead put up a placeholder image. Buccella’s goal in using the placeholder was to get Samuel L Jackson to wear this T-shirt. Although all the shirts were for sale, even the special black one, Buccella deliberately placed the sign up instead of a modeled image of the shirt because he “didn’t think anybody else was qualified [to model the shirt] except for

Samuel L. Jackson” (Waldon 62). Buccella knew it was unlikely that Jackson himself would see it, but he hoped somehow that someone would point it out or buy Jackson one of the special shirts. A few months later, in June of that year, Jackson was on television presenting an award at the MTV music awards and he was proudly wearing Buccella’s shirt (Waldon).

Buccella had no way to personally get a shirt to Jackson; however, with a clear purpose in mind, and an understanding of the potential power of the Internet community and of marketing conventions, Buccella deliberately and strategically drew attention to his desire for Jackson to wear the shirt. In this way, Buccella exercised his Rhetorical Knowledge abilities and in the end he achieved his goal.

According to the WPA OS, a person with Rhetorical Knowledge is aware of the different needs of their audience, adopts an appropriate level of formality, tone and voice, and uses appropriate conventions of structure and format for the intended rhetorical situation and purpose (CWPA). Matt Barr developed and displayed a clear understanding of all these elements in the way he participated in the *SoaP* SME. When Barr heard about *SoaP*, he became enamored with the idea and decided to compose a song. As Barr was humming a potential chorus to himself at work as a kindergarten teacher, his students heard the tune and asked him what it was for. Once the kids heard about *SoaP*, they too became enamored and demanded to know more. So Barr took what he knew about *SoaP*, ie the initial idea and a few stills that were released online, and turned the plot of an R-rated horror film into a story appropriate for his kindergarten audience. He even got his students involved in the writing of the story, which he eventually posted online, along with a *SoaP* coloring sheet that Barr made from the movie poster (Waldon).

Focused on making *SoaP* appropriate for his 5 year old students, not only did Barr use his Transmedia Navigation and Multitasking abilities as he searched the Internet for any material relating to the plot of *SoaP*, but he also made use of Rhetorical Knowledge abilities as he transferred a story told in one genre into two completely different genres, a children's story and a coloring sheet. Barr and his students also engaged in Performance abilities as they worked together and role-played the different scenarios that ended up becoming the final story that was posted online (Waldon).

Inspired by a *SoaP* teaser trailer they found on YouTube, David Levy and Trevor Ryan created their own short video entitled *How Hollywood Really Works* (Waldon). The video plays on the *SoaP* phenomenon by telling the story of a film producer on the phone with a client. The client wants to make a movie based on the book *Diary of A Young Girl* by Anne Frank, the well known book based on the diary that Anne Frank kept as a young Jewish girl living in the Netherlands and secretly hiding from the Nazis in the attic of a neighbor's house. Levy and Ryan's video starts with the film producer telling the client that he reread *Diary of a Young Girl*, while in reality he is flipping through a Cliff notes version of the book. With gusto and enthusiasm, he reassures the client that he is excited about producing the *Diary of Anne Frank*, but that for better cinematic effect the producer suggests what he calls a few minor changes. Before the end of the phone call, the producer has changed the "stagnant, stationary" setting of an attic to a plane; changed the villain from Nazis, (whom he doesn't want to offend afraid that they won't spend their money to see the film), to snakes, (whom he claims no one likes anyway and who don't spend money to see movies); and turns the main character from a "little Jewish girl hiding from snakes" to a "big, African American battling snakes" (Levy and Ryan). The

movie ends as the producer takes an incoming call from Samuel L Jackson, and asks Jackson if he likes snakes.

In order for Levy and Ryan to come up with the script for the video, they not only had to role-play how they imagined Hollywood producers would think, but they also had to research and imagine what would be the concerns and interests of producers. Levy and Ryan also clearly had a rhetorical purpose in mind for the video: to make a satirical comment on how they perceive Hollywood sacrifices narrative integrity and authorial control for sensationalism and economic gains. Through their participation in the *SoaP* SME, Levy and Ryan developed and exercised Rhetorical Knowledge and Performance abilities.

Another short YouTube video, made by 15 year old Parker Hicks, along with his brother Forrest Hicks and friend Justin Edwards, was not a satirical commentary about Hollywood; however, like Levy and Ryan's video, it did show how Hicks developed his Performance and Rhetorical Knowledge abilities. Showing awareness and use of the conventions, structures and format of horror movie trailers, to wit an awareness of rhetorical conventions for movie trailers, Hicks displayed his understanding of Rhetorical Knowledge in crafting his own fake trailer. The plot of the video is simple: a series of quick shots of the three boys pretending to be a passenger and an airline attendant interacting on a plane, and then being attacked by snakes. The quality of the video is obviously that of an amateur, was shot in someone's living room, with stuffed toy snakes, and is clearly of three teenage boys messing about with a kooky concept and having fun.

What makes this particular video interesting, however, is the clear level of thought that went into trying to reflect the structure, format and genre of a typical movie

trailer. The action shots are interspersed with text that is written using a font associated with scary movies, and that is broken up into smaller pieces of text to reflect the way professional movie trailers build suspense. The first action sequence of the video is actually of a toy plane hanging from a string with a voice-over of the airplane captain announcing that he has turned on the “fasten seatbelt” sign (Hicks). This scene is reminiscent of “external” scenes or scenery shots that are often seen at the beginning of trailers used to set the scene and provide context for the audience. As the video progresses, dramatic instrumental music is played over the action, emphasizing the dramatic tension of the action onscreen. There are even well-timed cymbal crashes and ominous drum-beats leading up to the moments when the passengers are attacked by the snakes. Finally, as the movie sequences finish, there is a final black screen where the videos’ credits scroll up the screen, again written in the same ‘scary’ font (Hicks). Each one of these elements is typical of movie trailers in general, and especially of movie trailers for horror films.

Although I have focused on the *SoaP* SME for this discussion, other SMEs also display participant’s understanding of Rhetorical Knowledge. Gerry Pugliese, an ardent fan of the *Mass Effect* trilogy, wrote a fan fiction version entitled *Mass Effect 3: Vindication (ME3V)*, showing what he felt the ending to the video game should have been (Tassi). Pugliese’s text endeavored to make rhetorical choices of structure, genre and format that allow an interactive video game to be converted to a static, linear print format, and yet still make use of print traditions of illustrations and font manipulation to retain the essence of the original visual medium. In the BfoW SME hundreds of entries were posted on various webpages selling three ring binders, especially on Amazon.com.

Each entry clearly had a rhetorical purpose, be it to provoke laughter, or to make a more serious comment on the situation of women in the workplace. As another illustration, many originating images ended up circulating online as part of the BfoW SME, with various elements in the pictures taken from more news stories than just that surrounding Romney's 'binders' comment during the second presidential debate. Almost every image had the rhetorical purpose of promoting political satire at Romney's expense. No matter what the actual subject of the SME is, participants in SMEs clearly display their understanding of Rhetorical Knowledge as described by the WPA OS.

Overall, these case studies of various SMEs have shown that SME participants exhibit the Rhetorical Knowledge desired by the WPA OS, especially through their use of Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance described by Jenkins et al. as PCAs. These case studies also show that many of those who participate in SMEs "understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts," one of three examples the WPA OS provides in its plank Composing in Electronic Environments. As shown in several of the examples above, participants in SMEs regularly need to understand and strategically employ the variances in rhetorical strategies in both print and electronic media, often taking an element from one medium and successfully using it in another for a specific rhetorical purpose. Although any spreadable media in a participatory culture can potentially accomplish this end, it is SMEs where this particular element of Composing in an Electronic Environment shines.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to explore how SMEs offer unique and engaging opportunities for those who participate in them to develop and practice the

various abilities described in the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge, as well as the PC abilities of Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking, and Performance. One overriding component of all these SMEs that is noteworthy is what these SMEs provided participants in terms of engagement. Each of the ideas behind the SMEs were on one level specific enough to provide a shared frame of reference, but open-ended enough to allow people to take the ideas behind the SMEs and to bring them in to their own sphere of interest and expertise and then, once their contribution is created, to share what they have created with others believing that what they have made will be of value to someone in the online community. By allowing people to ‘find the gap’ so to speak, where they could incorporate the idea into something that they already knew and understood, the SME then served as a scaffolding of sort that helped enable the participates to engage in the WPA and PCAs that they may not be as familiar with. This was true in the case of Barr, the kindergarten teacher, who brought *SoaP* into his professional life and in the process strengthened his Rhetorical Knowledge abilities; and of Buccella who was already part of a group who sold clothing online. There are many more examples of people who did not generate digital texts, but who still found creative and rhetorically effective ways to engage with SME ideas in their own spheres of experience: the S.O.A.P hockey team who thought the idea of snakes on a plane so terrifying they decided to use it as their team name (Waldon); Carolyn C, a member of Cosplay group, who got her group to dress up as snakes and go to her local *SoaP* premiere (Waldon); the poet who used *SoaP* as a metaphor for death in his now sought-after poem *Snakes on a Plane* (Waldon); the guy who sent cupcakes to the BioWare headquarters; the politically active women’s group protestors who wore binders as Halloween costumes outside Ohio GOP

headquarters, to name but a few. So, if SMEs do hold some potential for helping students engage in these important abilities, perhaps one thing we can learn from SMEs is the way that they leave enough ‘gaps’ in the idea for students to be able to bring that idea into their own sphere of interest and expertise and to use it as a form of scaffolding upon which to build Rhetorical Knowledge through Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance.

CHAPTER 3: KNOWLEDGE OF CONVENTIONS AND PROCESSES IN FAN LABOR

A group of fans become so invested in a TV show that they decide to write their own stories based on it, show that story to other friends online, and get feedback and constructive comments. A series of images gets passed around the online community, which in turn sparks altered versions circulating. A group of people online realize that they share several of the same fandoms, and they decide to come together and form a new community based around those shared fandoms. These are all examples of a type of participatory culture activity called Fan Labor.

Definitions

The term Fan Labor refers to the artistic actions that fans engage in when they create texts centered on their favorite musical group or media property, fans being understood here as individuals who are intensely devoted to their object of ardor (Elyafi). Fan Labor comes in a wide range of creative actions, which result in producing texts, referred to as Fanworks, such as pieces of music, art, written texts, videos, etc, which are made by fans for fans ("Fanwork"). In short, if Fan Labor is the creative activity, Fanworks are the artistic texts produced from that activity.

When talking about Fan Labor and Fanworks, some other terms also prove helpful: fandom, canonworks, Fanart, Spreadable Image, Recut Trailers, and Fused Fandoms. A fandom or fan community is a social network or subculture of fans united together by their shared object of interest ("What Is a Fandom?"). As a broad term, Fandom can also refer to the interrelated social networks of separate fandoms, with some fans identifying as belonging to multiple fandoms. Canonworks, are the materials accepted by fans as part of the fandom's 'universe' or sphere of interest. Usually these

materials are those source texts originally produced, sanctioned or endorsed by the production company of the given fandom's object of interest i.e. the canonworks of a Disney Princess fandom are Disney films that star princesses, like *Cinderella* or *Mulan*.

The term Fanworks encompasses many different types of fan-made artistic texts; for this dissertation I will only be referencing a few types: Fanfiction, Fanart, Recut Trailers, and Fused Fandoms. Fanfiction is fiction written by fans based on the established cast of characters, plot elements, or settings from their favorite media franchise. The fans appropriate and rework the original material, developing alternative plots and settings, filling in narrative gaps, and even writing "cross-over" narratives combining elements from different media franchises in one narrative (Black; Jamison; Jenkins *Textual Poachers*). Another type of Fanworks is Fanart, which denotes any form of amateur art created for a specific fandom. This term originally included only hand-drawn images or paintings. Now it includes all texts from any medium except film or video.

A Spreadable Image is any static image that circulates online, be it originating, altered, or as-is. Although not all spreadable images online are Fanart, (ie made by a fan and including elements of a fandom), a large quantity of spreadable images are, be it through taking smaller images from different sources and assembling them together into an originating text, taking an originating image and modifying it to become an altered image, or whether it involves taking ideas and elements from within multiple fandoms and combining them together in an originating image of some kind. Within spreadable images there are several subgroups of images, and each subgroup has with it specific

elements and rules that govern that image, for example image macros, advice images, Lolcats, and demotivational posters⁴ to name but a few (Staff "Know Your Meme").

Fan-made film or video texts have their own label: Fanfilms. The name Fanfilms, although a subset of Fanworks, itself encompasses many smaller categories of filmic activities; however, for this discussion, the only pertinent type of Fanfilm is Recut Trailer. A Recut Trailer is a video composed by 'recutting' or editing together canonwork footage to create a fake or parody trailer, often supplanting the narrative of the source material or composing a new film that will never exist (Williams).

The last form of Fan Labor I have identified myself and call Fused Fandoms, a comparatively new phenomenon that has not properly been identified and researched. A Fused Fandom is one where several fandoms have been combined to create a new fandom with its own unique identity, where this new fandom meets three criteria: a) The individual fandoms are distinct, previously unrelated, fandoms⁵; b) a fictional universe is embraced by the fans where characters from all the fandoms coexist and can interact with one another; c) there is a distinct presence of the new fandom in online social communities (such as Tumblr, Pintrest, Instagram, etc.) under one, established name. In short, a Fused Fandom is a collection of individual fandoms that have come together deliberately, and have specifically created a new identity for themselves through a united

⁴ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give an exhaustive list and description of each type of spreadable image subgroup; however, my point is to demonstrate the prevalence of these subgroups and to point out that each subgroup comes with its own distinctive set of features and characteristics, its own 'grammar system' so to speak, that is typically observed in the images' creation.

⁵ For example, a crossover between the fandoms of *Star Trek*, *Enterprise*, and *Deep Space 9* would not qualify because the latter two are spinoffs of the former and hence are not previously unrelated.

effort to appropriate elements drawn from individual fandoms and refashion them into a unique, ‘new’ fandom. Technically a form of Fan Labor, because fans have come together to create a new text, a Fused Fandom is also itself a fandom; it is both a Fanwork and a fandom⁶.

The primary aspect of a participatory culture activity that Fan Labor demonstrates is the creation and circulation of the cultural material being consumed. Although individuals who engage in Fan Labor often do collaborate with other participants, as well as archive the material they encounter, those engaging in Fan Labor predominantly take culture apart, recycle it, and put it back together in new and inventive ways. In essence, participants exert agency over the cultural texts that they consume, a key indicator of a participatory culture activity.

Not much research has been done specifically referring to the term Fan Labor; however, the field of Fan Studies has undertaken research in fandoms in general, especially in regards to the circulation of fan materials, such as the work pioneered by Jenkins in his books *Textual Poachers* and *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers*. Paul Booth explores using fandoms as teaching resources in high school, and Michael Lachney explores the potential that embracing students as fans has on the teaching of new media literacy (Booth; Lachney).

In the field of Composition, some research has been done regarding fandom and digital writing in specific spaces, like blogs (Kleinfeld) and online forums (Cavanagh), while others explore the question of remix and the potential this offers to ‘rewrite’ the established narratives of canonworks (Penrod). Kyle D. Stedman looks at the

⁶ For a more detailed explanation and example of a Fused Fandom, see below under the discussion of case study fandoms.

compositional strategies behind remix texts, and the pedagogical potential of these strategies (Stedman). Brian Ray takes this research a step further and focuses on the intertextuality of genres within the remixed texts (Ray). Finally, in a co-authored article, Andrea Davis and her colleagues look at the interconnection of remix, play, and composition, posing questions about the writing process and about the future of writing in digital spaces that are taking place in online fan communities and Fanworks .

There is some research on specific types of Fanworks, particularly Fanfiction and Fanart. In Fanfiction, research explores different types of Fanfiction, from that written within specific fandoms, to questions of sexuality and adult themes (Graham; Jamison; Tresca; Tosenberger). Within an educational setting, Fanfiction has been researched regarding plagiarism (Burns and Webber), and on how news media coverage of fanfiction impacts teachers' perception of fan fiction as a pedagogical tool (Berkowitz). In the field of composition Rebecca W. Black in particular has investigated the pedagogical potential that fanfiction offers in various aspects of writing instruction, especially affinity spaces, language and online identity, and ESL instruction (Black). Other scholars look at the potential fanfiction has for facilitating collaborative and participatory writing (Coleman; Rish and Caton); and for fostering peer review and feedback in a composition classroom (Chandler-Olcott and Mahar; Parrish).

Research on Fanart falls under the category of images and visual literacy. In an educational setting, scholars argue for the importance of visual literacy in schools in all subjects (Moore-Russo and Shanahan; Cerkez; Schieble), as well as offering up favorite classroom activities that can increase visual literacy (Coleman and McTigue; Palmquist). In Composition specifically, much research looks at visual rhetoric (cf. George; Handa;

Hiligross; Hocks and Kendrick; Kress and van Leeuwen; Wysocki). Recently, scholars are exploring latent visual literacy to foster more traditional literacy abilities (Rowell and Kendrick; Wagner; Zimmermann), and on the potential of image parodies and mashups in regards to literacy abilities and as a methodology for tracking images across different genres, mediums, and contexts (P. K. Jensen; Gries).

In the WPA OS, Fan Labor employs two planks: Processes, and Knowledge of Conventions. Processes is concerned with the different strategies that writers used to conceive of, develop, and refine their texts. Such composing processes rarely conform to a strict structured progression from conception to refinement, but rather are adaptable and flexible depending on the context and the instance (CWPA). Knowledge of Conventions deals with established rules and recognized guidelines that define different genres, and helps to establish a common set of expectations. This common set of expectations then facilitates comprehension, coherence, and communication between authors and readers. Expectations vary depending on the occasion, discipline, and genre of the communication, and even on the technology and media that are used (CWPA).

The Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs) that Fan Labor primarily encompass are Appropriation and Negotiation. As is the case in chapter two, a more detailed description of these particular PCAs will be given throughout this chapter; however, in general, Appropriation focuses on the capacity to deliberately and intentionally select different, and often disparate, elements of media content and to recombine them in meaningful ways. Negotiation deals with the ability to move through various online communities, identifying and respecting multiple perspectives, and understanding and abiding by alternative norms. (Jenkins et al.)

In the remainder of this chapter, I argue that fans engaging in Fan Labor demonstrate criteria from both the WPA OS planks Processes and Knowledge of Conventions, as well as the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation, as described by Jenkins et al. I begin with a brief outline of four fandoms—Doctor Who, Sherlock, Supernatural, and Fused Fandom SuperWhoLock—, and then explain how Fan Labor evidences Processes and Knowledge of Conventions, as well as the abilities of Appropriation and Negotiation. I conclude that Fan Labor and the Fanworks it produces serves as a framework for participants to engage in WPA OS and PCAs, one that also allows individuals to gain better understanding of the social, collaborative, and intertextual nature of composing and consuming texts.

Fandoms

Every fandom has a set of pre-established conventions and ideas based on the canonwork from that fandom. By focusing my exploration of Fan Labor to the texts that derive from specific fandoms, I hope to establish shared schemata from which to explore these texts, and provide us with a finite number of illustrative examples. This should minimize the amount of contextual-based exposition, and allow me to focus on the WPA OS and PCAs under discussion. My chosen fandoms are the British television shows *Dr. Who* and *Sherlock*, the American television show *Supernatural*; and the fused fandom, SuperWhoLock. What follows are brief synopses of each.

Doctor Who is the adventures of a time traveling, humanoid alien from the planet Gallifrey, a Timelord who goes by the name of the Doctor, and who travels in time and space in his sentient time machine called the TARDIS. Together with his human companions, the Doctor visits different planets throughout the galaxy, and throughout

time, defeating villains and monsters alike, rescues beings in trouble, and rights wrongs wherever they can. *Doctor Who* was created in 1963 by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), and is now the longest running science fiction television series with over 800 episodes spanning 50 years (Glenday). During that time there were two runs of episodes: the classic series from 1963 until 1989, and the new series beginning in 2005 to the present day. During the interim, the strong fan base kept the *Doctor Who* world alive through a myriad of Fanworks and fan clubs, both online and off. Thirteen different actors have taken on the role of the Doctor. The changeover from one Doctor to another is Regeneration, a unique capability of Timelords who physically alter their bodies to cheat death. Time travel, Regeneration, and the TARDIS, are some features that *Doctor Who* is most known for.

Sherlock is a British crime drama television series that presents a modern version of *Sherlock Holmes*, a series of detective stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Using the “holmesian method of deduction” made popular in Doyle’s books, in combination with modern technology, like social media and nicotine patches, Holmes and Watson solve cases and save lives in present day London, England (Thorpe). Created for the BBC in 2010 by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, *Sherlock* stars Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes, and Martin Freeman as John Watson. To date nine, 85-90 minute-long episodes have aired (D. Walker). Although a modern adaptation, some of the traditional, iconic elements from Conan Doyles’ original stories are present in the TV show, such as the iconic address 221b Baker Street, set in the center of London, England. Holmes’ wardrobe is also still iconic; however, the traditional deerstalker hat and cape of Conan Doyles’ Holmes has been replaced by the now equally

iconic navy blue scarf and Belstaff Milford coat of Gatiss and Moffett's Holmes (cf. Bignell and Shields; Morris; Petridis).

Supernatural is an American drama television show that chronicles the adventures of two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester, who drive around America in a 1967 Chevy Impala hunting and killing monsters, ghosts and other supernatural entities. They are joined by angel Castiel in their battle against the forces of evil, led by the demon king of Hell, Crowley. Written by Eric Kripke, *Supernatural* is produced by the CW network. The series, which first aired on September 13, 2005, stars Jared Padalecki as Sam and Jensen Ackles as Dean. In time, Misha Collins joined the cast as Castiel, and Mark Sheppard as Crowley (Erickson). Apart from the Impala, and Castiel's iconic trench-coat and black wings, some of the most famous aspects of *Supernatural* are the show's rabid and prolific fans, and the relationship the TV show has with them.

One of the first fused fandom to really emerge was SuperWhoLock, established by fans of the three shows *Supernatural*, *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*. The exact genesis of SuperWhoLock is hard to pinpoint, although in early 2012 blogs started to begin to appear sporting names such as "superwholock" and "fuckyeahsuperwholock" (Romano). Numerous posts appeared on social media sites like Tumblr supporting "this team free will/team tardis/blogger detectives vs the universe thing" (hoursago). By April of 2012, In SuperWhoLock emerged as a Fused Fandom with the release of a YouTube video posted by Ricki Mc-Steamy, titled "*Superwholock: The Eleventh Reichenbach Song*," which claimed to be a trailer for a movie that was "coming never" (Romano; Mc-Steamy). The video cleverly wove together short canonwork video clips from all three shows, setting them against a stirring musical score, and presented a single imaginary

storyline comprised of the main heroes of the shows teaming up together to defeat all main villains of the three fandoms. Since this video was released, there has subsequently been an endless stream of imaginative and inventive SuperWhoLock-based texts, including image macros, fanfiction, fanart, and more fictional trailer videos (Romano).

There are two predominant WPA OS planks that Fan Labor exhibits: Processes, and Knowledge of Conventions; however, a small clarification is necessary. While the WPA OS does recognize the creation of non-written texts, writing clearly is the main focus of these outcomes, understandable coming from *writing* program administrators. Throughout the WPA OS, but especially in Processes and Knowledge of Conventions, several criteria foreground the writing process, for example “understanding *writing* as an open process....”; “collaborative and social aspects of *writing* processes” (emphasis added). Other criteria highlight writing-specific features, such as “syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling”, or “structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics” (CWPA). Knowing format-specific elements and ‘syntax’ rules is important for all types of texts, not just writing. If we broaden the term ‘writing’ into ‘text’, then it includes those same specifics in all compositions, written or multimodal, traditional or digital. Recognizing this broader understanding, for the purposes of this chapter, I will be discussing any writing-specific criteria in the more expanded sense of text-specific criteria.

Processes and Knowledge of Conventions in Fan Labor

The first of the two WPA OS planks that Fan Labor exhibits is that of Processes. This plank highlights the various methods and practices of composing and creating texts.

Fan Labor is, essentially, taking elements from disparate texts and purposefully putting them together, or deliberately recombining them, to create something new. Put another way, the individual engaging in Fan Labor is taking a draft or iteration of one or more texts, and ‘revising’ them through alteration and modification. In this way Fan Labor foregrounds individual steps in the composing of texts, such as taking “multiple drafts to create...a successful text”; using different media to “address a range of audiences”, and developing “flexible strategies for generating, revising, [and] editing” texts, including returning to the text later using significant “invention and rethinking to revise the work” (CWPA).

Secondly, Fan Labor foregrounds the “social and collaborative aspects” of both composing and “critiqu[ing] their own and others’ work” (CWPA). It also encourages the development of “flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading” texts (CWPA). Predominantly Fan Labor involves combining elements from canonworks, or Fanworks created by other fans. The social nature of the composition process is reflected in the fan’s use of others’ Fanworks, with the collaborative nature reflected in the new iteration of the texts that are created collaboratively in terms of authorship of the different elements being combined. Often in Fan Labor, especially in Fanart, an iteration of a text is made in response to the originating text, and in that sense is “critiquing” and commenting on the originating text, as well as also joining the social and collaborative cultural conversation surrounding that particular text.

In all the fandoms discussed in this chapter, those individuals who engaged in Fan Labor clearly exhibited an awareness of the abilities outlined in the WPA OS plank Processes, i.e. an understanding of the open nature of texts and the power and role of

revision, as well as an understanding of the social and collaborative nature of the composing process. Spreadable images within the Fanworks of *Doctor Who* show this understanding. An innocent comment and originating image posted on the *Doctor Who* fan Internet forum *Outpost Gallifrey* prompted over 1000 altered iterations, highlighting an awareness of the open nature of texts, with several of them displaying the fans' clear efforts to "use invention and re-thinking to revise" the originating text (CWPA) (See Appendix F.1 and F.2). The social and collaborative nature of Processes is also clearly demonstrated in the same *Doctor Who* forum thread. Some of the altered texts were posted as parts of smaller 'conversations' within the larger thread like the back and forth of a conversation, as if some posts were making a 'statement' and others were 'replying' (see Appendix F.3).

Fanworks in the fandom for *Supernatural* also illustrate how the WPA OS plank Processes is evidenced through Fan Labor. *Supernatural* fans are some of the most prolific writers when it comes to Fanfiction, with over 101, 000 stories posted on the popular site *FanFiction.net*⁷ (FictionPress). Within fanfiction communities, the *Supernatural* (SPN) fandom being no exception, the notion of revision through multiple drafts, as well as giving critique and feedback is evidenced through beta readers, someone who reads through a story before it is published to the fanfiction site and giving feedback and critique (Karapovich). At the beginning of the Fanfiction *Supernatural: Redemption Road*, several beta readers were listed along with the authors. Often, Fanfiction authors encourage audience feedback and critique, even humorously so, through the posted comments at the end of their story, as seen in the request of

⁷ The average number of fanfiction stories posted for a TV show on this and other fanfiction sites is less than 1000.

Supernatural fanfiction author Moon Raven 2; “Each time you review, Cas makes cookies good for you. He can do that, you know: he’s an angel.”⁸ Clearly, Fan Labor does indeed exhibit the WPA OS plank of Processes.

Knowledge of Conventions is the second of the two WPA OS planks exhibited by Fan Labor. This plank focuses on the importance of understanding the various conventions and “common formats of different types of texts,” something that Fanworks are particularly noted for, especially in regards to both playing into, and against, those conventions (CWPA). Often Fan Labor involves the specific manipulation of textual conventions through the purposeful and deliberate putting together of different elements, which adds a level of sophistication that is hard to achieve otherwise. “Common formats”, “genre conventions” and “control [of] surface features” all come into play and are open to manipulation in different ways in Fanworks that cannot so readily be identified and acted upon in other more traditional types of texts (CWPA).

The WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions also advocates the importance of “practicing appropriate means of documentation” (CWPA). Copyright laws and the importance of intellectual property rights certainly comes into play here, especially with the practice of taking elements from various sources. Different types of Fan Labor are better at encouraging documentation of work; however, all types of Fan Labor not only highlight the importance of formal documentation to avoid copyright issues; they also open up avenues to practice other kinds of documentation, ones that contribute to the development of gift economies that are a key aspect of online communities. In a gift economy, intellectual property is not formalized, but rather is recognized and rewarded

⁸ <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/250618/Moon-Raven2>

through such methods as linking back to the original work, personal acknowledgements, recommendations and referrals (Cf. Rheingold; Jenkins “Spread Dead”). Fan Labor offers a unique opportunity for individuals to not only practice different types of traditional documentation, but also for documentation and acknowledgements within gift economies that take place in online communities.

Fanworks are illustrative of how Fan Labor is evidence of the WPA OS Knowledge of Conventions, both in regards to an understanding and exercising of conventions, and of utilizing “appropriate means of documentation” (CWPA). Fanart, particularly spreadable images within Fanart, serve as meaningful illustrations of how Fan Labor evidences understanding and manipulating of conventions. Within spreadable images there are different genres of images, and each genre comes with its own set of conventions and formats, e.g. demotivational posters, face swaps, and anti-jokes (See Appendix G.1, G.2, and G.3). Fans in particular combine these pre-established spreadable image conventions with the conventions of their given fandom to compose spreadable image Fanart that speaks to multiple audiences at once, both fans and non-fans alike. In Appendix G.4, All the authors not only show understanding of the spreadable image conventions, they also show knowledge of a culturally common joke “Why was 6 afraid of 7? Because 7 ate 9”. The Supernatural fan also played with the conventions in the Supernatural fandom that a) Cas is notoriously literal and b) that Cas actually spoke the sentence in a canonwork episode. The Doctor Who fan also manipulated the conventions of the cultural joke with those of that fandom in regards to the order of regenerations of the Doctor, in combination with the last names of the corresponding actor playing the Doctor (See Appendix G.4). Knowing these formats and conventions, and either

following them, or deliberately and rhetorically working against them, is an integral part of creating spreadable images within Fanart.

Fanfiction is another form of Fan Labor that is illustrative of the WPA OS Knowledge of Conventions, especially in regards to conventions of written narratives, including not only structural and surface features of written texts—sentence, paragraphs, correct spelling and grammar—but also of the print-based genre of fiction books and novels. Awareness of this genre is clearly evidenced by the inclusion of compositional elements of narrative fiction—plot, character development, narration, dialogue, story arc, etc—as well as the format and structural elements of books, such as chapters, tables of contents, and in some cases prologues and epilogues (Cf. BleedingInk; ElocinMuse; Frostfyre7; Moon Raven2; Qzil). Authors of fanfiction also incorporate and follow the established conventions from the fandom’s canonworks, such as established characters; common settings; frequently used items; or even linguistic cadences of characters and particular phrases and terminology used. In *Supernatural* Fanfiction, these conventions include the 1967 Chevy Impala the brothers drive, Castiel’s wings, Dean’s catch phrase “Sonofabitch”; and the term “meatsuit” used to refer to the body of a possessed person; (Cf. ElocinMuse; jackvelvet; nyoka; swordofmymouth and tiptoe39). Fanfiction has even developed its own set of conventions that authors adhere to, adding a third layer of conventions that must be understood and employed. For example, the term ‘drabble’ refers to short fiction 100 words or less; ‘AU’ stands for an ‘alternate universe’ different from the established canonwork setting; and ‘OTP,’ which stands for ‘one true pairing,’ indicating the author’s ideal romantic character-pairing (Moonbeam).

The WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions is also shown through the Fan Labor of Fused Fandoms because in every Fused Fandom text there is a clear amalgamation of key conventions from all of the respective fandoms. In Appendix H, in the top right corner, is a piece of Fanart from the SuperWhoLock fandom incorporating established conventions from all three fandoms. The letters forming the words “SuperWhoLock” are presented in the same format as the opening titles from the three respective television shows: “SUPER” using opening titles of *Supernatural*; “WHO” from *Doctor Who*; and “LOCK” from *Sherlock* (see Appendix H, left side column). The background is a devil’s trap from *Supernatural*, with a silhouette of Cumberbatch’s Sherlock Holmes in the center. Inside the silhouette is the Doctor’s TARDIS, and painted on that is an angel sigil from *Supernatural* (see Appendix H, bottom row). Cleverly constructed, this SuperWhoLock text is an excellent example of how Fan Labor shows knowledge of, and incorporating, established conventions from all the respective fandoms in the text.

In regards to the WPA OS plank Knowledge of Convention criterion of utilizing “appropriate means of documentation”, Fanworks do not foreground documentation, and copyright laws are not always observed appropriately; however, it is interesting to note that when fan create their own original Fanworks, they are quick to sign their work, even if the texts include ideas or likenesses from copyrighted material. Other fans are sensitive towards the author’s intellectual property rights and frequently either ask for permission to use the author’s work, or to post a hypertext link back to the original author’s website. Appendix I is an originating *Doctor Who* Fanwork created by strawberrygina⁹ and posted

⁹ <http://strawberrygina.deviantart.com/>

on the Deviant Art website¹⁰. Under each figure, Strawberrygina clearly placed her digital signature i.e. the url of her webpage. Under the post strawberrygina noted her work was inspired by the painter Alphonse Mucha, and that the “space backgrounds are edited stock images from dastardly_icons,¹¹” another Deviant Art community member (strawberrygina). In the comment section, which is open to the whole Deviant Art community, several other members asked for permission to use strawberrygina’s work in their own if they credit her and post a “link back” to her initial image (Starsong-Studio). Nowhere, however, does strawberrygina show any understanding of the legal copyright conventions, because she does not give any credit to the *Doctor Who* franchise or acknowledge any copyright infringement on her part, even though she is obviously aware of the informal documentation conventions of Fanart communities.

Other forms of Fan Labor reveal a more conscientious usage of traditional documentation as advocated by the WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions. This is particularly true of fans creating Fanfiction, who often post disclaimers at the beginning of their stories, such as “no copyright infringement is intended”; “I do not own...”; or, “...belong to the writers and creators” of the original material from which the story was inspired (cf. angel-castiel-rules-the-world; samuel.steele.7946; Team; Tomas). Fans producing Fanfilms are also more deliberate in their documentation practices, along with incorporating the conventions of their fandom, a good example of this being the SuperWhoLock video *Superwholock: The Eleventh Reichenbach Song*, created by Mc-Steamy and posted on *YouTube*. In addition to incorporating the generic conventions for a

¹⁰ <http://www.deviantart.com/>

¹¹ <http://dastardly-icons.deviantart.com/>

video¹², and established conventions from all three fandoms¹³, the video exhibits traditional, as well as participatory community gift-economy documentation conventions. In the opening seconds of the film, Mc-Steamy uses the logos of Kripke Enterprises (*Supernatural*) and BBC Wales (*Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*), and his own website URL. At the end of the video, Mc-Steamy also lists the names of all the actors who appear in the video ie, the main stars from the three shows (Mc-Steamy). These Fanworks illustrate that Fan Labor does open up a space for individuals to develop both legally, and informally, “appropriate means of documentation” called for in the WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions (CWPA).

Appropriation and Negotiation as WPA Outcomes

Appropriation and Negotiation are the two primary PCAs utilized and developed Fan Labor, and although they are distinct abilities, both are encompassed in the WPA OS planks of Processes and of Knowledge of Conventions (Please see Appendix E for a more detailed discussion how these PCAs are encompassed in the WPA OS as a whole). Consequently, individuals must have a firm understanding of the criteria in the WPA OS planks Processes and Knowledge of Conventions in order to develop and use the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation. In short, evidence of these PCAs is also evidence of Processes and of Knowledge of Conventions.

As a PCA, Appropriation is identified as the capacity to “meaningfully sample and remix” the existing content of the media they encounter (Jenkins et al. 55). For Jenkins et al., the word “meaningfully” raises this ability above simple “cut and paste”

¹² opening titles, dramatic music well-timed to the images, quick cut-scenes giving a taste of the plot, etc

¹³ the clips used are taken from various episodes of all three respective TV shows

technical competency, and instead turns it into a process of deliberately and purposefully dissecting and reassembling culture, an ability that is at the heart of Fan Labor (Jenkins et al. 55). Criteria from both Processes and Knowledge of Convention are embedded in Appropriation, which can be seen clearly through Fan Labor. In order to meaningfully take apart culture and reassemble it innovatively, fans must realize that creating is “an open process” which for “later invention and re-thinking [of the] work,” along with an ability to “develop flexible strategies for generating [and] revising” texts (CWPA, Processes). This understanding works symbiotically with “developing knowledge of genre conventions” and “common formats for different texts, ” because in order to take apart something meaningfully, first you must understand it (CWPA, Knowledge of Conventions).

Appropriation, the “process by which students learn by taking culture apart and putting it back together”, was the core Fan Labor engaged in by Karamb Olga in the Fanart “All About SuperWhoLock¹⁴” (See Appendix J) (Jenkins et al. 55). This Fanwork is composed of 50 separate SuperWhoLock images draw from sources all over the internet and assembled into one originating SuperWhoLock Fanwork. The characters from the three fandoms *Doctor Who*, *Sherlock* and *Supernatural*, have never appeared together on screen, so all the images in this text are altered images¹⁵, themselves composed by other fans from smaller elements of other originating texts. Karamb Olga deliberately chose and assembled images from their original contexts online, showing

¹⁴ Posted on Deviant Art at <http://karambolga.deviantart.com/art/All-about-SuperWhoLock-326924868>

¹⁵ Mark Sheppard is the only actor to appear in multiple SuperWhoLock fandoms, *Doctor Who* and *Supernatural*. Only one image containing Mark Sheppard actually is Canonwork; all others are altered texts.

“knowledge of” not only “common formats” and “genre conventions” of the fandom SuperWhoLock (CWPA, Knowledge of Conventions), but also a firm grasp of the “open processes” of composing, and of the place that “invention and re-thinking” have in the “flexible strategies” needed for composing and revising texts (CWPA, Processes).

Appropriation used in Fan Labor is also evidence of other criteria of the WPA OS plank Processes, in particular fans’ ability of “critiqu[ing] their own and others' works” (CWPA). In order to carry out Appropriation, individuals perform both analysis and commentary as they purposefully dissect and reassemble culture. Jenkins et al argue that “sampling intelligently...requires a close analysis of the existing structures and uses of [cultural] material,” and meaningful assembly “requires an appreciation of emerging structures and latent potential meanings” (Jenkins et al. 58). In order to engage in Fan Labor, fans must analyze culture material and understand both its structure and use, as well as any commentary, blatant and latent, the material makes. Through this analysis and critique, individuals can shrewdly decide which sample will best suit the rhetorical purpose of their Fanwork, and the best structures and formats to incorporate into/play against as they compose their own text.

Fanwork from SuperWhoLock serve as illustrations of fans carefully analyzing and commenting on material they acquired through Appropriation. The Fanwork “SUPERWHOLock: What’s your favourite?”¹⁶ (sic) is a chart that, through a series of questions and arrows, identifies which of the three SuperWhoLock fandoms is the reader’s favorite: *Supernatural*, *Doctor Who* or *Sherlock* (See Appendix K). In the process of appropriating the elements from the fandoms, the author carried out a close

¹⁶ Created by nero749 and posted on the website Deviant Art at <http://nero749.deviantart.com/art/Superwholock-Flowchart-303081740>

analysis of the three fandoms' canonworks, finding both points of comparison and contrast. Appendix L, an example of a spreadable image type troll quote¹⁷, illustrated how the author deliberately played on conventions of all three SuperWhoLock fandoms to comment on the three characters involved. The quote, wrongly attributed to Sam Winchester, is said by Sherlock Holmes, while the figure is David Tennant's Doctor. In the quote, Sherlock admits to being a "high-functioning sociopath" and not a psychopath, as he was accused. In the series, Sherlock's behavior vacillates between the two disorders. By including Sam and the Doctor, the author highlights the latent potential these two also have to vacillate between these behaviors: Sam when he was high on demon blood (*SPN*, season 5); the Doctor, when he committed genocide of an alien race (modern series of *DW*, season 4). As these examples show, through Fan Labor, fans use the PCA Appropriation to analyze and comment on cultural material, as advocated by the WPA OS plank Processes.

As with Processes, the PCA Appropriation also evidences other criteria from the WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions, especially as they "practice", "develop" and learn to "control" various "genre conventions" and "formats [of] different kinds of texts" through scaffolding (CWPA). An aspect of Appropriation, scaffolding allows individuals to "focus on some dimensions of cultural production and rely on the existing materials to sustain others" (Jenkins et al. 58). By using elements in other texts as building blocks to which they can "scaffold" or add their own original elements, individuals can potentially overcome any anxiety they have towards the composition process. Additionally,

¹⁷ Troll quotes present a quote from a particular television show or movie but ascribe that quote to a character from a different TV show or movie. More often than not, the background in the text will come from a third, disparate TV show or movie (Masem).

individuals can harness already-established cultural tropes that can help connect them to an audience beyond simply family and friends, helping individuals to see their work as part of a larger, cultural conversation.

A prime example of this is a *Supernatural*-based fanfiction “World on Fire” written by ElocinMuse, which uses fandom-established settings and characters as scaffolding in order to focus on character relationships. This requires a close analysis of the established character conventions, such as speech patterns and personality traits, without which the story would not be accepted by other fans. ElocinMuse also uses the setting of a minor episode as scaffolding so she can focus more on the certain unexplored aspect of the relationship between Sam and Dean. The author also takes direct quotes from at least five episodes and weaves them into the story (see Appendix M). ElocinMuse chooses quotes from conflicts and conversations that were central to the brothers’ relationship in the original material and recontextualizes them so as to play out differently in the changed circumstances, even to the point of changing the fundamental relationship between the brothers. With other quotes, ElocinMuse changes words to past tense in order to be a reflection for characters, thus changing the outcome of that conversation. She also puts words in a different character’s mouth, thus recontextualizing the quote itself and the latent meanings of the words. Through Fan Labor, ElocinMuse exhibits Appropriation as understood and embedded in the WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions.

Negotiation is the second PCA that is demonstrated through Fan Labor. According to Jenkins et al, the ability of Negotiation involves being able to move between disparate communities, perceiving and respecting different viewpoints, and

understanding and following alternative norms. The WPA OS plank Processes is evidenced in Negotiation in the criterion “Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” through foregrounding the social and constructed nature of composing texts and establishing information and knowledge (CWPA). The WPA OS plank Knowledge of Conventions is also embedded in Negotiation, although less obviously, through criteria advocating learning “genre conventions” and “formats for different kinds of texts” (CWPA). Like different types of texts, different communities have established conventions that can be identified and learned, so that the act of negotiation between and through these communities becomes a form of understanding and using those conventions. Unlike the PCA Appropriation, it is difficult to tease apart the way these two planks work separately in Negotiation because, on a social level, the respective criterion go hand in hand. To that end the rest of my discussion of Negotiation will incorporate both planks simultaneously.

Because Fan Labor involves taking elements from often-disparate texts, the texts often being found in different online communities, Negotiation is important for fans to be able to successfully engage in Fan Labor. Negotiation encompasses negotiating both between disparate communities or subgroups in a larger community; and through dissenting opinions within a community, such as conflicting meanings and values attached to the same cultural element (Jenkins et al.). Because culture moves across different communities easily, sometimes disparate communities encounter each other, resulting in “heated conflicts” because of their different group conventions (Jenkins et al. 98). Even if the group conventions are not in conflict, conflict may still arise between communities, or even between individuals in the same community about the different

meanings and interpretations attached to the same cultural artifacts (Jenkins et al.). Fan Labor opens a space for individuals to explore and embrace these different perspectives using Negotiation, and allows individuals to successfully navigate those differences.

Fan Labor foregrounds dissenting perspectives in different online communities, a key aspect of the PC ability Negotiation, and often opens a space for common ground to be found. The *Doctor Who* fandom has a division between Classic *Doctor Who* fans (date 1963-1989), and Modern *Doctor Who* fans (2005 - present). There are fans of both; however, many tend to prefer one series over the other (Fletcher). Appendix N is a series of Fanart that foregrounds dissenting perspectives between the groups, and illustrates how fans used Negotiation through Fan Labor to arrive at a resolution. The eleventh Doctor's wardrobe and catchphrase caused some tension between Classic fans and Modern fans, the catchphrase being "I wear a bow tie now. Bow ties are cool."¹⁸ (McAlpine). This caused tension because 1) previous regenerations of the Doctor's had worn bow ties, and 2) each regeneration had its own unique iconic wardrobe element, e.g. the Fifth Doctor's piece of lapel celery, or the Fourth Doctor's exceedingly long colorful scarf.

Fanart in Appendix N reveals this division, with N.1 showing Modern fans embracing the new look, and N.2 showing the Classic fans' irked response. Some spreadable images in N.2 picture various classic Doctors who regularly wore bow ties stating that fact, implying the eleventh Doctor was not the one who made bow ties 'cool'. Others show Classic Doctors substituting their iconic element into the catchphrase (eg. "I wear celery now. Celery is cool"), or making derogatory comments (eg "I just had a

¹⁸ Quoted from the first episode of the fifth series of the modern *Doctor Who*.

nightmare that I was into bow ties”). N.3 shows some *Doctor Who* fan-created Fanart showing both Classic and Modern Doctors wearing bow ties and united under the same catchphrase/quote. These fans exhibit Negotiation by identifying the different viewpoints of the different *Doctor Who* fan groups, and by creating texts that offers a space to create common ground between the two.

Fused Fandoms are particularly useful in identifying how Fan Labor exhibits Negotiation, and consequently the WPA OS plank Processes and Knowledge of Conventions. Fused fandoms not only have to respect the conventions and values of multiple different fandoms, they also have to subsume these conventions and values into one new, unified fandom community that equally represents all the respective fandoms, as well as establishes a new set Fused Fandom as a whole. Appendix O is Fanart from the SuperWhoLock Fused Fandom, and recognizes conventions from all three separate fandoms as well as the SuperWhoLock fandom, while at the same time trying to foreground how the separate fandoms can share common ground and find unification. In the upper half are listed the different points of views across the three fandoms, identifying how main characters of the three fandoms would deal with a monster. In so doing, the author also incorporates notorious phrases attributed to each of the respective characters. In the lower half of the Fanart, are drawn (left to right) Castiel, the Doctor and Sherlock, each with his outfit and a silhouette or shadow of an object that uniquely represents that character. Obviously the author has identified and foregrounded the unique elements that are notorious to each of these fandoms, identifying unique conventions and norms being an integral part of the PCA Negotiation.

At the same time, the creator has also tried to unify these disparate characters. The author shows the responses, although different, to a shared stimuli i.e. a monster. In addition, all three characters are drawn in the same cartoonish style, each one holding their respective iconic item, and each one with a shadowed silhouette. Although the shadows themselves are different, they are all the same color with similar shading and sizing within the image itself. Finally, at the very bottom of the image is the title “SuperWhoLock” with the lettering represented in the same format as the opening titles from the three respective shows, a formatting that has become an established norm in the SuperWhoLock fused fandom, thus showing that the author also understands conventions of the SuperWhoLock fandom. The composer of Appendix O not only displayed an understanding of the difference of the various fandoms being referenced in this Fanwork, but also created elements among the disparate fandoms that were unifying through stylistic choices and artistic techniques., this fan has used Negotiation in their Fan Labor that serves as a resolution of differences among the three individual fandoms, or at the very least, a unifying set of conventions and values for SuperWhoLock as a whole.

Individuals engaging in Fan Labor are developing and exercising many of the WPA OS plank criteria of Processes and Knowledge of Conventions, along with the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation. Fan Labor also encompasses one of the three criteria found in the WPAO category Composing in Electronic Environments: using “electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts” (Black xiii-xiv). Individuals who engage in creating Fan Labor constantly are using electronic environments for all aspects of the composing process. Even if individuals do not use electronic environments during the initial stages, in order to participate in online

communities individuals must eventually convert their print/paper based creations into digital form in order to post and circulate them online. Knowing this inevitable step could encourage individuals to seek out and experiment with new digital tools that can help facilitate the creation process. Consequently, circulating Fanworks, the products of Fan Labor, within Participatory Culture communities allows individuals to exhibit and develop the WPA OS plank Composing in an Electronic Environment.

Fan Labor offer those individuals who create Fanworks to cultivate and exercise the various criteria described in the WPA OS planks Knowledge of Conventions and Process, as well as the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation. One element that emerges as foundational to Fan Labor is intertextuality, which is at the heart of Fanworks in terms rhetorical impact; as the mechanism that engages fans to create Fanworks; and, binds the respective online communities together. Intertextuality is a powerful tool when wielded deliberately, and Fan Labor provides opportunities where individuals can juxtapose disparate elements together that have layers of cultural and linguistic meaning. By deliberately appropriating, juxtaposing and composing altered texts from the various canonworks and originating texts, fans can use Fan Labor as a space to experiment with those meanings, as well as better understand the meanings these elements hold for others both in within and across online communities.

Second of all, the intertextuality in Fan Labor serves as a powerful source of engagement for those both creating and encountering those Fan Labor. To understand and share in a joke can be a powerful bonding force between people, helping them to feel a sense of connection and relationship with other individuals and within a community as a whole. For example, it gave the Classic and Modern *Doctor Who* fans a way to negotiate

their differences and find common ground that bonded the whole community together. Consequently, one thing we can learn from Fan Labor is to pay specially attention to foregrounding the potential of intertextuality at all levels of the composing process, and to cultivate and refine the WPA OS planks of Processes and Knowledge of Conventions, and the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation.

CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL THINKING, READING AND WRITING IN ALTERNATE REALITY GAMES

An online group of gamers work collaboratively to write a series of short stories and subsequently publish the collection in book form. Using online written forums to coordinate, a network of people analyze a series of images to discover real-life places embedded in pictures, while teams on the ground in Seattle find those places and relay coordinates back, connecting those coordinates to form a message. Teams of strangers from across the Internet work together to rhetorically analyze a complex fragmented video broadcast, and synthesize this with other material and ideas, to identify a specific message and clear call to action. Each of these three events occurred during the course of playing a particular type of game, a participatory culture subset called Alternate Reality Games (ARGs).

Alternate Reality Games

An Alternate Reality Game (ARG) is a cross-media, interactive game that uses the real world as a platform to deliberately blur the line between the in-game world and the real world. The game often involves multiple media and game elements to tell a story that may be affected by participants' ideas or actions. Any ARG includes five main criteria: 1) an interactive narrative, frequently with elements of the storyline being provided to players in almost any format, from email, to newspaper articles, to real-world events using actors interacting with participants; 2) incorporation of cross-media elements; 3) a blurred line between in-game and out-of-game experiences, the game often following the TINAG (This Is Not A Game) principle; 4) player involvement with the story and/or fictional characters, often by "reaching out" into their lives through various media (email, text message, etc), connecting players to each other; and 5) puzzles, many

of which can only be solved by the collaboration of multiple players (Hea, Howe and Zimmerman; Gosney).

Even though ARGs are an established, though relatively new game genre, when ARGs first emerged they were considered to be marketing campaigns. Because of the product-promotion element, and because information often spreads “virally” within the ARG community, ARGs are often compared to memes and considered to be “viral”. Whereas some ARGs are created to promote a product, not all ARGs are marketing campaigns; some are just to entertain and to tell a story. Consequently, ARGs have become an established genre of games in their own right (Despain).

Definitions

When discussing ARGs, several terms also prove useful: pervasive games, augmented reality games, MMORPGs, TINAG and rabbit hole. Pervasive games spread the game-play out beyond the restrictions of a game board or a screen, into the real world. Players use social media and mobile digital devices to participate in a gaming experience that is intertwined by the game makers (aka puppet-mars) with the real world and so is potentially playable anytime, anywhere (Benford, Magerkurth and Ljungstrand; Montola, Stenros and Waern). Although both pervasive games, *alternate* reality games and *augmented* reality games are distinct types. Alternate reality games (ARGs) endeavor to replace reality with a “well-developed, real-seeming fiction” (Despain). That alternate, fictional reality then serves as the foundation of the game. Augmented reality games (AuRGs), on the other hand, start with reality as the foundation of the game and then build onto the real by augmenting it i.e. by changing or improving the way gamers

interact with reality in some way. Thus in AuRGs, reality is augmented in some way; in ARGs reality is replaced with an alternate fictive reality (Despain).

Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) are an amalgam of massively multiplayer online games and role-playing video games. MMORPGs, then, are online video games that are “self-contained environments” created for players to immerse themselves in an online world and escape the real world. These games are different from ARGs because MMORPGs offer a video-game environment while ARGs “take the entertainment experience to the player and alter how they view their existing reality. [An ARG] tweaks every-day things to get the players to see their normal lives as somehow essentially different and part of the narrative” (Despain).

Unlike the other terms thus far, TINAG does not refer to a genre of game. Rather, it refers to a philosophy, one that ARG puppetmasters (game-makers) try to adhere to: “this is not a game.” This philosophy was created by Elan Lee when, as lead puppetmaster, he helped to create the very first ARG for Spielberg’s 2001 movie *AI: Artificial Intelligence*. Spielberg wanted the game to be an immersive experience, and so Lee and his team set about to do just that (Thompson). The TINAG philosophy encompasses three guidelines: 1) don’t tell anyone—this helps generate a sense of mystery that draws players in and helps to facilitate a greater level of engagement; 2) don’t build a game space, thus allowing players “to play at not playing a game.” (Thompson); 3) don’t build a game; instead build experiences and game worlds that give the impression that they are real ie. “that don’t know that they are games” by being “fully fleshed out and consistent” (Thompson). These three guidelines serve as the framework for the philosophical principle TINAG upon which every ARG is created.

The final term to be highlighted is “rabbit hole.” Drawing the analogy from the Lewis Carroll’s novel *Alice in Wonderland*, a “rabbit hole” is the initial clue, website or bit of information that leads a person into the ARG ("Glossary"). Just as Alice followed the White Rabbit through the rabbit hole into the bizarre realm of Wonderland, players follow the “rabbit hole” into the “alternate reality” of the ARG. The game mechanic of a rabbit hole is how puppetmasters subtly catch potential players’ attention and entice them into playing the ARG.

Like SMEs and Fan Labor, ARGs are a participatory culture activity, with participants creating and circulating material they consume. Participants also collaborate with other community members, and between communities, as well as archiving material for the use and consumption of others as well as themselves. ARGs revolve around the discovery and sharing of information and designed to be too large and complex to be solved by individuals alone. So the social connection to, and collaboration with, other players is a critical activity of engaging in an ARG. Consequently, sharing and archiving information, ideas and clues of the ARG is equally critical, and again is an activity undertaken by participatory cultures.

ARGs are relative newcomers to the game world; however, scholars and gamers alike are already publishing literature that looks at ARGs. The most accessible books are those that give an overview of ARGs—a description of what ARGs are, the history of the genre, as well as “how-to” guides for potential ARG game designers (cf. Gosney; Szulborski). Equally accessible, although not focused only on ARGs, are those books which are aimed at general readers and that look at gaming in general but that do include chapters devoted to ARGs specifically (cf. McGonigal *Reality*; Montola, Stenros and

Waern). Scholars have also written articles that give an overview of ARGs but that are aimed specifically at an academic audience (cf. Borland and King; Dena; McGonigal “Supergaming”). Jane McGonigal is often credited as the first scholar to introduce ARGs to an academic audience with her dissertation entitled “*Why I Love Bees: A Case Study in Collective Gaming*.” There are even a few academic articles that explore ARGs and how they foster various specific elements of participatory culture (Dena; Örnebring; Watson).

Scholars have also begun to explore the potential that ARGs have for teaching, in particular at the level of higher education. Some scholars advocate teaching with ARGs in higher education in general (cf. Boskic; Pineiro-Otero and Costa-Sanchez; Whitton and Hollins). Other scholars advocate teaching ARGs in higher education in specific subjects (cf. Connolly, Stansfield and Hainey; Hakulinen; Hea, Howe and Zimmerman). Researchers in the fields of both literacy and composition have also begun to explore the potential of teaching of literacy skills with ARGs, from developing a general meta framework from which to do so (Bonsignore et al.), to focusing on specific literacy skills important to composition, such as collaboration (Bono), student autonomy and peer learning (Whitton), and writing in digital environments (Nelson et al.). There are other educational and academic ARGs that have also been implemented: *The Hexagon Challenge*, designed to teach ancient and world history, created by Jay D'Ambrosio; *Reality Ends Here*, focused on freshman orientation at the USC School of Cinematic Arts (SCA), created by Jeff Watson; and *The Pocket Game* implemented at the Pennsylvania Education Technology Expo and Conference, created by Andy Petroski and Charles Palmer.

Aside from the already-mentioned scholarship exploring ARGs and literacies skills, little has been done on ARGs within the field of Composition and Rhetoric. What is of particular interest to Compositionists is transmedia narrative, and much work on transmedia narratives has been published. For example, numerous articles advocate teaching with transmedia (cf. Jenkins “Transmedia”; Pence). Others explore transmedia storytelling at a higher education level in general (cf. Alexander and Levine; Gronstedt and Ramos; Loertscher and Woolls; Sakamoto and Nakajima). Still others look at higher education, transmedia storytelling and literacy skills specifically (cf. Rodriguez-Illera and Molas-Castells; Lamb; Collins; Kalogeras; Jenkins “Transmedia”). Transmedia narratives and how they impact participatory cultures has been explored in a special edition of *Adaptation* (Nicklas and Voigts). A few articles even look at the intersection of transmedia narrative and ARGs specifically (cf. Abba; Kim et al.; Ryan). Although little work has been done on ARGs and teaching composition to first year college students, enough work has been done on ARGs and teaching literacy skills, as well as composition-relevant transmedia narratives, to justify ARGs as a viable subject for more research within Composition and Rhetoric.

ARGs emphasize the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing (CTRW). This plank requires that students be able to use their reading and writing abilities for critical thinking, investigation, discovery and self-expression. In regards to writing assignments, students need to realize that the assignments they encounter in their classes are a sequence of smaller components comprised of discovering, examining, questioning and amalgamating relevant sources, both primary and secondary. Students

also need to combine their ideas with others, and to comprehend the critical relationship between knowledge, power and language (CWPA).

In the case of PCAs, ARGs encompass Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play, Simulation and Performance. A more detailed description of these particular PCAs will be given throughout this chapter; however, what follows are brief descriptions of these terms. Collective Intelligence deals with the capacity to “pool knowledge” and “compare notes” with others regarding a united purpose. Distributed Cognition concerns the ability to express oneself purposefully with tools that extend mental faculties. Judgment is the capability to determine the dependability and trustworthiness of various sources of information. Networking is the capacity to seek out, meaningfully integrate, and distribute information. Play is the ability to explore and test the surroundings as a method of solving problems. Simulation is the capability of understanding and creating “dynamic” replicas of real-world practices and procedures. Finally, Performance involves the ability to take on alternative identities for the purpose of discovery and improvisation (Jenkins et al.).

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss ARGs, claiming that players of ARGs engage in activities that meet criteria from the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing (CTRW), as well as the PCAs Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play and Simulation. I begin with descriptions of three ARGs—Test Subjects Needed, I Love Bees, and Perplex City—and then explain how ARGs evidence the WPA OS plank CTRW, as well as the six participatory culture activities. I conclude that ARGs open a space for players to develop and cultivate the WPA OS and PCAs, one that not only provides tools and opportunities for individuals to grow in

collaborative and social aspects of research and discovery, but also one that motivates individuals focus on a purpose and accomplish difficult tasks.

Game Descriptions

Three case studies will be used as examples throughout this chapter: *Test Subjects Needed*, *I Love Bees*, and *Perplex City*. *Test Subjects Needed* was officially titled the *Human Preservation Project (HPP)*; however, most players referred to the game as *Test Subjects Needed (TSN)*, the title of the initial website containing the rabbit hole, and the name stuck even once the official title was revealed (The_Bruce "Home"). *TSN* was created by 42 Entertainment, an American-based commercial game design company that is responsible for some of the most famous ARGs, including the very first ARG *The Beast*, used to advertise and promote Steven Spielberg's 2001 film *AI: Artificial Intelligence*. Although 42 Entertainment created and hosted *TSN*, confectionary corporation Wrigley actually sponsored the ARG as a way to promote their product line *5 Gum*. The game ran from May to September of 2011, and an estimated 9.3 million people played during that time ("Human Preservation Project").

The story of *Test Subjects Needed* begins millions of years ago when a prehistoric mankind suffers an epidemic that separates humans from their senses, causing apathy and eventually extinction. At this time the Human Preservation Project was developed, which involved people retreating underground in test facilities and sending out messages to future civilizations warning them of the danger using mechanical iceflies as messengers (The_Bruce "Story"). Skipping forward to the 1980s, fictional Professor Gerald Traelek established the Traelek Institute doing investigative research into "heightened sensory perception." Then, in 2011, several students of the Traelek Institute are mysteriously led

to an icefly buried in a glacier. The ARG begins when the icefly, once excavated, becomes active and flies to a hidden Human Preservation Project facility buried deep underground. Players then need to solve a series of complex puzzles that challenge each of the five senses in order to explore the long buried facility, unlock mysteries of the ARG, and prevent the epidemic from wiping out mankind a second time (The_Bruce "Story").

Like *TSN*, *I Love Bees* was created and run by commercial game design company 42 Entertainment (Lang). The ARG was sponsored by Microsoft as a marketing campaign for their 2004 Xbox video game *Halo 2* (*Shachtman*). The game was launched in July 2004 and, over the four month duration of the game, an estimated 600,000 people actively participated in the ARG, which is thought to be the most memorable ARG of all time (McGonigal "Why"; Lang).

The story begins when a future military spaceship is cast back in time and crashes on Earth, resulting in the ship's artificial intelligence (AI) being damaged. Trying to survive and contact any allies, the ship's AI, Melissa, relocates herself via the internet into the web server of a bee enthusiast's website entitled *I Love Bees* (Iezzi). Trying to send signals to allies, Melissa severely disrupts the operation of the website, much to the frustration of the website's owner Dana Awbrey. Chunks of Melissa's core memory get dumped onto the website, outlining Melissa's history, as well as the existence of a serious Trojan-horse computer virus that infected Melissa (Iezzi). With the help of the ARG players, Melissa is repaired and the virus deleted; however, the price paid for the repair is a powerful energy transmission notifying the Covenant, a race of evil aliens, of the exact

location of Earth. *I Love Bees* ends with the Covenant invading Earth, which is then where the story of the video game *Halo 2* begins (*Staff "Q & A: I Love Bees"*).

Perplex City was produced by Mind Candy, a British entertainment company. Unlike the other two case study ARGs, *Perplex City* was not created as a marketing campaign but rather as a stand-alone ARG with accompanying packs of collectable puzzle cards that supplemented both the ARG and the main *Perplex City* website (thestaff). The game began in April 2005 and lasted over two years before being won in February 2007 by Andy Darley, who found the main prize, worth approximately \$200,000, in Northamptonshire, UK ("£100,000 Prize for Digital Hunter "). Over 50,000 people officially registered to play via the *Perplex City* main website; however, it is estimated that the number of players was higher even though they did not officially register or purchase cards ("£100,000 Prize for Digital Hunter ")

Perplex City is the name of a large metropolis in an alternate dimension that mysteriously is connected to Earth, and is the setting for the background of this ARGs narrative. An ancient and precious artifact called the Receda Cube has somehow made its way to Earth after being stolen from the Perplex City Academy ("Quick Start"). For whatever reason, people from Perplex City cannot travel to Earth, so Sente Kiteway, the head of Perplex City Academy, asked for help from the citizens of Earth, offering to share any leads or clues they find (yanka). The Reconstructionists, a "Cube-worshipping cult," are also looking for the Cube for nefarious reasons. Working with students at the Academy, the ARG players need to find and return the Cube and keep it out of the hands of the Reconstructionists ("Quick Start").

Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing in Alternate Reality Games

The CWPA has determined that students' need for critical thinking, reading and writing skills are foundational for successful writers and communicators. Students need to be able to think critically about the texts they engage with; be capable of distinguishing between evidence and claims, identify any underlying assumptions, and make reasoned and developed assertions which can then be communicated clearly to others (CWPA). These critical practices are the essence of ARGs. Every ARG is different, with unique storylines, puzzles, and challenges; however, at the crux of every ARG is the need for "finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources" that will help players solve puzzles, decipher clues, and interpret what they find (CWPA). Players also need to "integrate their own ideas with those of others" as they work together to play the game. Because ARGs are designed to be too complex to be solved alone, players must use critical writing and reading abilities to collaborate and communicate with others (CWPA).

More than the other ARGs under discussion, *Test Subjects Needed (TSN)* excelled in its multimedia approach to both narrative and information dispersal. What is impressive is the depth and breadth of evaluation, analysis and synthesis skills the *TSN* ARG players were challenged to develop and use because of the vast range of genres of texts used by the ARG puppetmasters. *TSN* made use of a wide range of different media to present the storyline of the ARG, including several websites; various web pages; a series of comic panels; email; newspaper articles; computer files; computer code; several short videos; a brochure; a video game with multiple virtual areas to explore; a simulated science journal; static images; commercial posters; Facebook sites and posts; and items

sent through traditional mail that were personalized to each registered player. Encoded within each text were different hidden and cryptic messages, so that not only did players need to be able to understand how to find and evaluate each genre of text, but they also needed to be able to closely analyze the various elements of each genre of text. The narrative of the ARG was delivered to players through these same diverse genres of text, and the narrative was not delivered sequentially. So, in addition to “finding, evaluating and analyzing” various texts, *TSN* players needed to take pieces of information and plot elements from each text across all media and appropriately synthesize them to make sense of the narrative.

Collaboration and players learning to “integrate their ideas with those of others” was another key component of the *TSN* ARG, and another way that *TSN* exhibited the WPA OS plank CTRW. Because the genre of some of the texts included would have been comparatively uncommon to many players—e.g. academic (albeit fake) science journals, and computer code—players needed to cultivate their own research skills, as well as learn to draw on the expertise and knowledge within the player community in order to uncover all the hidden data. Players also needed to coordinate with each other through social media, predominantly in the form of writing, not just to find, pool, analyze, and synthesize information, but to archive it for, and disseminate it to, the whole *TSN* community. Clearly, participants in *TSN* made heavy use of critical thinking, reading, and writing as those elements are defined by the WPA.

Participatory Culture Abilities as Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing in Alternate Reality Games

ARGs utilized six PCAs—Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play, and Simulation—all of which are encompassed in the WPA

OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing (CTRW) (Please see Appendix E for a more detailed discussion how these PCAs are encompassed in the WPA OS as a whole). In order for individuals to develop and use these six PCAs, they must have a firm understanding of the criteria in the WPA OS plank CTRW. In essence, evidence of any of these six PCAs is also evidence of CTRW.

Of the eleven PCAs Jenkins et al. list, ARGs encompass six—Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play, and Simulation—mainly because these six are so closely connected. Collective Intelligence¹⁹, according to Jenkins et al. refers to the capacity to “pool knowledge and share notes” with other community members for the purpose of achieving a shared goal (xiv). This is almost identical to the CTRW criterion “integrat[ing] own ideas with ideas of others”, except Jenkins et al. added the emphasis “to share a common goal”, which itself echoes the “focus on a purpose” criterion in the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge (CWPA; Jenkins et al. xiv). ARGs are too complex to be solved by any one player alone, and so players must come together collectively and share their intelligence, in multiple senses of the word, with the goal of moving forward in the game.

I Love Bees excels as an example of how ARGs foster collaboration among players towards a shared goal. One of the key elements of the game play for *I Love Bees* was a series of puzzles that revealed 210 pairs of global positioning system coordinates and time codes. Players eventually figured out that the coordinates referred to various pay phones, and the time codes to the exact minute when the phones would ring (Shachtman).

¹⁹ Collective Intelligence, as a term, was first coined and identified by Pierre Levy in his 2000 book *Collective Intelligence* arguing that in an online community, “everyone knows something, nobody knows everything, and what any one person knows can be tapped by the group as a whole” (Jenkins et al. 71).

Because the pay phones were located all across the USA, players had to coordinate and work together to answer all the phones, for with each phone call came the potential for clues to the game (Terdiman). Players had to give answers to prerecorded messages, so it was important to make sure that those answering the phones had all the relevant information. It took great collaborative effort pooling and integrating knowledge to decipher the answers to the questions, and make sure those that could answer the phones had all the correct info, and then report back any new info, which in turn then got dispersed throughout the whole player community, so that the whole community could move forward in their goal of finishing the game.

In order to facilitate Collective Intelligence—the pooling of information, and collaboration towards a shared goal—Jenkins et al claim that knowledge communities are formed, networked groups of “like-minded” people who share common interests or embrace “common enterprises” (71), a prime example of which is a community of ARG players. Within knowledge communities, where information from various individuals and sources is pooled, the group as a whole must determine the validity of what has been found; that is, the information must be double-checked and “vetted” by the collective intelligence (77). Thus, through practicing Collective Intelligence, knowledge community members begin to “understand...the relationships among language, knowledge, and power” (CWPA).

In *TSN*, game players on two different ARG forums, *UnFiction* and *WikiBruce*, not only had to assess and vet material found by members of those individual groups, but also had to vet information between the groups in order to solve some puzzles. One puzzle was to compile a complete QR code from 49 smaller QR codes (7 x 7) that had

been printed on ID badges sent out to registered *TSN* ARG players. Although there were only 49 unique smaller QR codes, many thousands of players received identity badges, so there were multiple duplicate codes distributed among all *TSN* player across multiple different ARG communities playing the game. Not only did the various communities of players have to collaborate, each community, as well as the *TSN* community as a whole, needed to double-check and vet all the QR codes that were submitted by players, until in the end, one large QR code was assembled that led to the next major website and clue for the game (Wikibruce). In this way, the whole knowledge community of respective ARG players collaboratively exerted the PCA Collective Intelligence.

Although closely related to Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition is another distinct PC skill that ARGs employ. Jenkins et al identified this PC skill as “the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacity” (65). This ability corroborates with an unstated assumption of the WPA Outcomes Collective that writing is a tool that “expands mental capacities” as evidenced in the CTRW criterion requiring students to “use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking and communicating” (Jenkins et al. 65; CWPA). Distributed Cognition is posed in opposition to the traditional notion that intelligence is an individual attribute, and instead suggests that intelligence is dispersed across the body, the brain and the world (Jenkins et al.). It is also not just about using various “mind-expanding” technologies, but also about seeking out experts, and connecting to social institutions that could offer assistance explaining or deciphering a particular issue (Clark; Pea). Because of the very complex nature of most ARGs, players need to learn to think with and through tools, as well as with and through other people; all these elements are the essence of the PCA Distributed Cognition.

In *TSN*, players were presented with a large image comprised of a series of labeled dots seemingly arranged in a spoke formation, with some sort of key in the upper left quadrant (fig 3). There was much collaboration and brainstorming throughout the ARG community forums, and everything from connecting the dots in various ways, to comparing the arrangement of dots to star charts was suggested and attempted. Eventually one player recognized a particular series of connect-the-dot attempts as representing a semaphore flag, an expertise that this player had but that no one else playing seemed to possess. Once the discovery was made and the player shared his expert “piece” of the puzzle, then everyone worked together to consult both the semaphore-expert player and various semaphore databases to work out the hidden message in the image. The ARGs *I Love Bees* and *Perplex City* had similarly complex problems drawing upon the collective knowledge of the group, with *Perplex City* players even turning to British archeologists to help seek out and retrieve the buried Cube (Darley). All of these are prime examples of Distributed Cognition, and hence the WPA OS plank CTRW, at work within communities of ARG players.

The third PCA employed by ARGs, Judgment, goes hand in hand with Collective Intelligence and Distributed Cognition and yet, like the other two, is distinctly different. Judgment involves the ability to determine the dependability and trustworthiness of various sources of information (Jenkins et al.). This seems fairly straightforward; however, within a collective intelligence, where cognition and intelligence is distributed, determining the validity of knowledge is not a matter of judging a fixed truth, so to speak. Instead, it is understanding that validity is dependent upon where the respective piece of information is in the knowledge community’s vetting, which is to say that if only a few

members have approved the information, it is not as valid as if it has been deemed reliable by the whole community. The amount of material thrown at ARG players is vast and all of it needs to be evaluated and assessed by the whole community; thus, the credibility of material depends on where it is in the process of the community vetting.

One particular puzzle from *I Love Bees* serves as an example of how ARGs employ the PCA Judgment, and consequently the plank CTRW. Early on in *I Love Bees*, players sent emails to an in-game character called Margaret. Soon these players received a reply email filled with random words and fragmented sentences that seemed nonsensical, such as “voodoo witch voodoo parents” and “I can see the forte” (Rowan). Players across various online communities quickly came together, pooling, analyzing and dissecting the mysterious email at length. Over time, however, some players began to believe that the mysterious email from Margaret was actually a compilation of pieces of their own emails combined and sent back to them (Barber). The various communities of players came to a consensus, deciding that further analysis of those emails should be abandoned. Instead, the community focused on sending new emails to Margaret in the hopes of providing (what they eventually figured out was) the AI, Melissa, with a larger vocabulary so that she could to explain what help she needed. Depending on where the ‘crazy’ email was in the ARG community’s vetting process, the email held various positions of importance and significance. It was only when an influential majority of the players had weighed in on the email, and it had been vetted by the group, that the text’s true status as irrelevant was identified and acted upon accordingly.

The fourth PCA that ARGs engage, Networking involves the capacity to “search for, synthesize, and disseminate information” (Jenkins et al. 91). Networking foregrounds

how each of these actions are distinct but interrelated steps in a process, in same way the CTRW criterion emphasizes that composing is “a series of tasks”, and that each step—“finding, evaluating, analyzing and synthesizing”—is itself distinct but interrelated. In ARGs, each Networking action is drawn out because of the wealth of potential information available during gameplay, and because at any time, each task could be going on simultaneously among different subgroups within the ARG community. Because of the TINAG principle, everything could potentially be a clue, and could be found anywhere at any time. When searching moves beyond ‘standard’ databases out into any space, the focus of the search becomes both narrowed and broadened; narrowed in that the focus is narrowed to look at only elements of the text itself (i.e. ‘focused in to’), and broadened in the sense that the search-range is broadened to include both cyberspace and the real world.

Networking in terms of searching by ‘focused in to’ and ‘expanding out’ is illustrated in the ARG *TSN*. During the game, a hand-drawn image captioned “Discovery can’t be painted in broad strokes—it’s the fine details that linger in the aftermath” was found on an in-game website in a computer folder titled ‘conduit’ (Appendix P) (The_Bruce "Story"). The main image seems simple enough—player speculation was that it is a painting of an icefly. Much debate, however, went in to various aspects of the image and its caption. The materiality of the painting was analyzed, from the quality of the paper, to the yellowing tape ("[Site] Traelek Institute"). Some thought the brush strokes were stretched-out, hidden letters, or that the strokes contained a hidden picture. Others printed the image out and folded it or rolled it into a tube to look for a hidden message. Still others examined the digital image file in Phototshop and the website’s

source code, looking for anything hidden. Some members focused on the caption, and on the folder title “conduit” (“[Site] Traelek Institute”). In the end, players focusing on the caption discovered that the word ‘aftermath’ in the sentence led to a newspaper clipping. Irrespective of what was actually discovered, the kinds of analysis and the depth of thought put in to ‘mining’ any potential information from the image is remarkable. This level of analysis was given to all materials located during the game, illustrating that ARGs encourage examining materials and resources at even a microscopic level of detail.

At the other extreme, ARGs encourage Networking that includes ‘expanding out’ in the search for materials beyond the borders of standard sources. Elements of ARGs often ‘bleed into’ real life, meaning that anything in a player’s daily life could potentially be part of the ARG. ‘Blurring’ that required expanding regular search parameters in *TSN* involved packets of Wrigley’s *5 Gum* sold in stores. Inside packets of *5 Gum*, marked with a white icefly silhouette, were written codes needed to gain access to certain parts of the in-game website. These special boxes were distributed nationwide, and players had to go look for them in stores in their respective cities. Hunting for the boxes took time, and players kept each other updated with ‘icefly sightings’ on various *TSN* ARG community forums (“5 Gum Location and Info”). This form of Networking that included expanding out the search parameters beyond simply online and digital environments not only increased the fun and engagement of the players, but also illustrates that ARGs engaged the Networking PCA on multiple levels.

The last two PC skills that ARG embody, Play and Simulation focus less on knowledge communities, as the other PCAs in this chapter have, and more on how individuals interact with information. Play, as explained by Jenkins et al., is the ability to

“experiment with the surroundings as a form of problem solving” (35). For Jenkins et al, the emphasis of Play is less about ‘fun’ and more about ‘engagement’. The effort involved in Play, (e.g. for a difficult video game), is not always fun or pleasurable, but akin to tedious work with a “payoff down the line” of skills mastered (Jenkins et al. 37). Play as active engagement also inspires “risk taking” and “experimentation,” and sees the practice of problem-solving as equally significant as finding the solution. The WPA OS plank CTRW advocates the use of “writing and reading for inquiry, learning [and] thinking”, in essence encouraging individuals to experiment with literacy and composing as a way to solving the problem of what they want to communicate, and of how best to accomplish that (CWPA).

ARGs encourage players to cultivate their Play skill by providing a space for learning through experimentation with low emotional risks of failure. Failure is part of the learning process; with little or no risk to the individual, then that person will try something and potentially repeat the process until they have successfully conquered the situation. In *TSN*, players were presented with a series of digital environments where they had to manipulate various elements on screen. The different environments were extremely complex, and so the potential for failure was high; however, because there was no loss or penalty within the game for failure in the digital environment, players were encouraged to ‘die and do over’, to learn through trial and error, until they could successfully navigate the digital environment.

Also, ARGs motivate active engagement through the type of gameplay involved in successfully completing an ARG, such as puzzle-solving, the narrative elements, and the competitive and yet community-based elements among game players (Moseley et al.).

Scholar and educational designer Alex Moseley, specifically designed *Perplex City* with the goal of researching motivational elements in ARGs and their potential for learning. Moseley's research uncovered that the most actively engaging aspect of the ARG were solving puzzles and receiving points for completion that were posted to the *Perplex City* website leader board (Moseley). Because ARGs encourage players to cultivate active engagements, and to experiment with elements within the game as a method of solving problems, ARGs are ideal for cultivating in people the PCA Play.

Simulation, the last PCA discussed in this chapter, is closely related to Play. Jenkins et al. define Simulation as “the ability to interpret and construct dynamic real-world processes,” an ability that overlaps with the CTRW criterion to “use writing and reading for inquiry, learning [and] thinking” (Jenkins et al. 41; CWPA). Both these abilities encourage experimentation for discovery and learning, with “writing and reading” as tools which allow for creation of “dynamic real-world processes” (CWPA; Jenkins et al.). As new media advances, there are an increasing number of tools and digital technologies available online for individuals to create their own sophisticated simulations of real-world processes. For example, in the case of writing, desktop publishing is providing tools for individuals to simulate and explore the real-world processes of professional publishing. Learning through such models increases the kinds of experiences people can have, and allows individuals the ability to manipulate these simulations as a means of discovery in a way that would be impossible or impractical in the real world (Jenkins et al.). Learning then becomes a process of trial and error, something students frequently find more engaging than more traditional methods of

knowledge representation. As such, Simulation facilitates motivation in learning and is a valuable PCA to cultivate in individuals.

ARGs open a space for players to use both game-created and/or pre-existing new media technologies to engage in the PCA Simulation. In *Perplex City*, the player community faced a tall order: in order for an in-game character to gain access to important Perplexian library archives (which the players needed to access through the character), said character had to be a published author. In order to accomplish this task, players were asked to write stories about what it was like to live on Earth and to be human, with a view to collectively writing a book and so help out the in-game character, and equally, themselves. Using various software programs, desktop publishing tools, and other online new media technologies, players came together and wrote a collection of stories that they collectively edited and entitled *Tales From the Third Planet*. The book was published through the real-world, self-publishing company Seaside Press, and is still available for sale today (Alderman; Frauenfelder). As seen from these examples and from all those illustrated in this chapter, ARGs have great potential to help foster the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing, and the PCAs of Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, Judgment, Networking, Play and Simulation in ARG players.

Thus far this chapter has explored how ARGs encourage players to employ specific critical thinking, reading and writing skills advocated by the WPA, along with the six PC skills mentioned above, including in particular the two skills Networking, and Judgment. The last criteria suggested by the CWPA for the WPA OS plank of Composing in Electronic Environments suggests in its definition that students should be able to “locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic

sources, including scholarly library databases; other official databases (e.g., federal government databases); and informal electronic networks and internet sources” (CWPA). This criterion almost directly overlaps with the PCAs of Networking and Judgment, as well as including elements of the PCAs Collective Intelligence and Distributed Cognition. Indeed, one of the particular strengths of ARGs is that, because of the complexity of the puzzles, clues and often subject matter covered by the games, players need to foster and employ sophisticated research skills, primarily (although not exclusively) from electronic sources. Also, because of the breadth and depth of the information and texts used by the games’ puppetmasters, players need to be able to successfully inspect multiple levels and elements of different types of texts, as well as be able to place the in-game information and data in the larger context of real-life situations and conditions. Although it is important for each player of an ARG to develop these abilities for themselves, being part of a larger community of players allows individuals to pick up tips and tricks from other players on how to foster their research skills, and because more accurate researchers are of greater benefit to the whole group, many players are (for the most part) willing to help newer or less skilled players so as to benefit the group as a whole. In this way, ARGs potentially can help foster and strengthen individuals’ abilities called for in the third criteria of the WPA OS plank Composing in Electronic Environments.

The focus of this chapter has been to discuss how alternate reality games (ARGs) provide unique and engaging potentials for those who participate in them to develop and practice the various skills described in the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing, as well as the PCAs of Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition,

Networking, Judgment, Play and Simulation. One noteworthy component of this genre of spreadable media is that ARGs seem to excel at capturing peoples' hearts and minds and motivating them to participate in whatever activity they are called upon to do. Once they are hooked, so to speak, people will go to great lengths to learn, research, overcome, solve, to do just about whatever is necessary to achieve the game goal set before them. Related to the motivating power of solving puzzles and mysteries, ARGs also motivate players through providing strong and engaging narratives that often capture players' imaginations and emotions. Connecting with the characters in the game's story and trying to help them forward in their quests, or even simply see how the story concluded can be a powerful reason for players to participate in the events of the ARG. In many cases, because of the way ARGs are designed and implemented, although the overall narrative of the game is pre-established, the outcome of smaller scenes or events within the overall narrative structure are frequently left to the players to determine or significantly influence. This empowerment to interact with characters and narrative elements within the ARG is often a great source of engagement and appeal of the ARGs for players. Whether it is the human mind's need to identify patterns, to solve puzzles and figure out mysteries, or whether it is the interactive power of the game's narrative and the human heart's need to know "what happens next, and how it all ends", ARGs seem to be able to tap into many peoples' minds and hearts and persuade them to play along together. And along the way, these motivating factors open up possibilities for players to utilize and develop Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing; Collective Intelligence; Distributed Cognition, Networking; Judgment; Play and Simulation.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PEDAGOGY

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, spreadable media encourages the deployment of a series of abilities that not only help students to be better writers, according to the outcomes in the WPA OS, but also to be facilitative and empowered communicators in online digital environments. Chapter one laid out my initial interests and observations surrounding spreadable media (nee viral media), and how spreadable media texts motivate people to engage in compositional activities that we advocate in First Year Composition (FYC). After identifying three types of spreadable media texts—originating, altered and as-is—I went on to discuss one evolution of the question of how to respond to new media technology in the composition classroom, touching on the work of Sirc, Wysocki, Manovich, Wootten, and others, culminating in the conclusion that any pedagogical approach must promote both traditional and new media literacies equally, not replace one with the other. The roles of technology, new media and collaboration were also touched upon, concluding with a discussion of Jenkins’ term participatory culture in digital environments, and the impact participatory culture has on the establishment and sustainability of online communities. This discussion also involved Jenkins’ assertion that participatory culture offers potential for learning, and his subsequent list of eleven participatory culture “skills” (quoting Jenkins) that he believed necessary for all students to acquire in order to participate fully in their future professional and personal lives. After showing how well the Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs) align with the WPA Outcomes Statement (WPA OS), I concluded the chapter by putting forth the WPA OS and the PCAs combined as a lens through which to view three spreadable media case studies.

The first case study, the participatory culture activity Spreadable Media Events (SMEs), and subsequent exploration were the focus of chapter two. Deriving my definition of Spreadable Media Events from Shifman's work surrounding memes, I give a brief overview of the work being done on memes in academia, particularly Composition Studies. Using illustrative points from several SMEs, particularly *Snakes on a Plane (SoaP)*, I go on to show how SMEs encompass the WPA OS plank of Rhetorical Knowledge. I also discuss how the PCAs Transmedia Navigation, Multitasking and Performance are encompassed in Rhetorical Knowledge as evidenced in SMEs by participants' use of different genre conventions to convey their point, and their clear awareness of their audience, among other evidential elements. After a discussion of how SMEs display one criterion from the WPA OS plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE), I conclude by pointing out that Spreadable Media texts allow individuals to bring SMEs into in their own sphere of interest and expertise, reminiscent of a form of scaffolding, prior to composing, and then to share what they have created among the SME online community.

Chapter three opens with an explanation of the participatory culture activity Fan Labor, and various terms associated with it, in particular Fanworks. After a brief review of academic work being done on Fan Labor in the field of Composition, I give an overview of the four fandoms from which I drew my illustrations: *Doctor Who*, *Sherlock*, *Supernatural*, and *SuperWhoLock*. Two WPA OS planks, Processes, and Knowledge of Conventions, were then shown in detail to be exhibited by Fan Labor. Detailed examples were also given illustrating that the PCAs Appropriation and Negotiation were encompassed in the two respective WPA OS planks, as well as evidenced by several

Fanworks. Evidence of this was displayed in the way that individuals understood composing as an open process involving multiple drafts of a given text, showed a knowledge of genre conventions, and demonstrated an awareness of the social and collaborative nature of the composing process, to name but a few ways. I also briefly touch on the exhibition of a criterion from the WPA OS plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CIEE). As a conclusion to the chapter, I pointed out the way that Spreadable Media texts, in particular Fanworks, employ intertextuality, which can be a powerful rhetorical tool and source of engagement when wielded deliberately.

The third and final case study, outlined in the fourth chapter, looked through the combined lens of the WPA OS and PCAs at the participatory culture activity Alternate Reality Games (ARGs). After defining ARGs and some pertinent terminology, I offer an overview of research into the use of ARGs in education in general, and in Composition studies specifically. A description of three ARGs—*Test Subjects Needed*, *I Love Bees*, and *Perplex City*—was followed by an exploration of the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing (CTRW) in relation to ARGs, and how the texts created and circulated in ARGs showed use and understanding of this WPA OS plank, both in regards to individuals and to community member in collaboration. Six PCAs were then examined in light of how they were detected in ARGs and how they clearly evidenced the WPA OS plank CTRW through individuals' clear usage of reading and writing for thinking, inquiring and learning, and through individuals' display of integrating their own ideas with those of others, to reference just two pieces of evidence. The last CIEE criterion was also discussed in relation to ARGs, and the chapter concluded by

advocating the potential of puzzles and mysteries to foster not only motivation and engagement, but also critical cognitive abilities in students.

Throughout this project I have demonstrated that when people participate in the creation and dissemination of Spreadable Media texts, they are using, in meaningful and often sophisticated ways, the kinds of rhetorical and compositional activities that the WPA OS advocates, and composition instructors endeavor to teach. In the rest of this chapter I will discuss 1) the vision for my pedagogical approach Participatory Design; 2) how my pedagogy sits along side other pedagogical approaches that seek to address similar questions; 3) how my pedagogical approach differs from those other approaches, and; 4) implications my work offers for further research.

Participatory Design

By way of a summation to my work up to this point in time, I want to focus what follows on a foundation for my pedagogical approach to teaching composition based on the research presented in previous chapters: Participatory Design. Initially I wanted to take the title for my pedagogical approach from Jenkins' term and subsequent work on Spreadable Media. Although I prefer his term 'spreadable' versus 'viral', Jenkins' work focuses primarily on the circulation of spreadable media texts, and very little on their creation.

Business scholar Axel Bruns' work also looks at certain types of spreadable media and their circulation online, but he focuses more on how the texts are actually produced in online communities. Criticizing the use for online communities of the business model producer → product → user, he offers the term "produser" as a way to talk about those who are both creator (producer) and reader (user) of spreadable media text

(Bruns). Like Jenkins, Bruns explores how texts are created and disseminated in certain types of participatory communities; however, Bruns is clear to differentiate “creative produsage” texts, like those discussed in my research, from other forms of produsage texts, arguing that producers who produce produsage texts are not motivated by creative or expressive purposes (Bruns).

Even if Bruns had not distanced himself from the kinds of “creative produsage” texts my research examines, drawing the name of a pedagogical approach from Jenkins’ work on Spreadable Media, or Bruns’ work on Producer/Produsage, work that is in no way connected to teaching methodology, seems disingenuous. In the article “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” a collection of teachers and composition scholars calling themselves the New London Group (NLG) put forth a pedagogical approach, Design pedagogy, designed to address two questions: how to account for the impact of new media technology on traditional literacy, and how to account for the impact of social and cultural communities on the texts students create (Cazden et al.). The research done by the New London Group, although begun in 1996, long before participatory culture in digital environments rose to the forefront in online environments, deals with questions surrounding the impact of technology, as well as the impact of the social and cultural, on students and their writing. Although Design pedagogy was derived at a time when the Internet was on the rise, and social media and Participatory Culture as we now know it was in its infancy, these two questions still resonate in the present, and are at the heart of not only my research, but other Composition scholars as well such as Jody Shipka and Sarah Arroyo, to name but two.

For my pedagogical approach, then, I offer the term Participatory Design, drawn from Jenkins et al.'s pedagogical approach to teaching and learning with participatory culture, Participatory Culture Abilities, as well as the Design pedagogy put forth by the NLG. In light of these two approaches to pedagogy, as well as my own research, a pedagogy grounded in Participatory Design is based on two principals: 1) it fosters equally both traditional and new media literacies, and 2) it foregrounds participatory culture abilities in regards to the creation and dissemination of texts, thus advancing the WPA outcomes criterion concerning the social and collaborative aspects of composition.

As mentioned above, my work in this dissertations shares initial research questions that are similar to those independently addressed by Compositions scholars Jody Shipka and Sarah Arroyo, questions of how to accommodate new media technologies combined with (not substituted for) more traditional literacies; and, how to account for social and cultural influences on individual writers. Even though we started at similar places, however, we three each turned to different theoretical lenses through which to explore these questions. Whereas I turned to the WPA OS, and Jenkins et al.'s PCAs, Shipka turned to the work of Sociocultural Anthropologist James Wertsch, and Arroyo to the work of English and Media scholar Gregory Ulmer (Shipka; Arroyo).

As a way to wrestle with the question of how to teach composition in a way that accounts for the impact that new media technologies have on texts, Shipka explored the term technology, and questioned why in composition scholarship the term 'technology' primarily refers to computer technology, as opposed to a more general definition including all types of technology from the wheel, to electricity and pencils (Shipka). Shipka returned to the history of Composition as a field in an attempt to understand when

the field adopted what, to her, seems like a limited definition of technology, and hence a limited understanding of writing with and through different media (Shipka). Identifying a time in the early 1940s when many Composition scholars wanted to align the field with the field of Communications, Shipka argues that a communications approach to freshman college English not only emphasizes the ways in which writing connects to different media and forms of communication, but also “would underscore for students the connection between the social and personal dimensions of communicative practice” (Shipka).

Concerned that a limited definition of technology does not allow for a deeply nuanced view of literacy, nor does it facilitate a deeper understanding of “the productions, receptions, circulations and valuation of texts,” Shipka turned to the work of sociocultural anthropologist James Wertsch to help inform her research. Drawing on the work of Wertsch and his exploration of “individuals-acting-with-mediational-means,” Shipka explores the concept of mediated action and compositional texts in relation to the multifaceted processes and systems in which the texts were created, disseminated and received (Shipka). This sociocultural mediated approach to writing foregrounds, for Shipka, the materiality of compositional texts, both in terms of the physical tools used to create them, as well as the social, cultural and psychological tools (eg. family and friends) used.

Like Shipka, I too am interested in the sociocultural mediational nature of composing texts. Also, my interest in participatory culture and the way texts are created and circulated in participatory communities draws interesting parallels with the social and psychological mediational tools Shipka explores. For Shipka, the term ‘mediational tools’

is defined very broadly, so that even the input of friends and family on a students' composition can be accounted for and explored in Shipka's understanding of the term, thus allowing for the social and collaborative aspects of participatory culture to be encompassed in Shipka's work. The most obvious difference, however, between my work and Shipka's is in the range of textual media explored. Whereas Shipka focuses on the materiality of the tools of mediation, because of my particular interest in the creation and dissemination of spreadable media texts, my work focuses specifically on digital texts alone. Another deviation is that whereas Shipka's work does account for the social and collaborative nature of the compositional process, she tends to privilege social interactions in regards to individual authors and their work, as opposed to the social and collaborative interactions of people in the process of composing co-authored, collaborative, community texts.

For Arroyo, the inspiration for her work stemmed from her interest in the social media platform YouTube, and the kind of compositional work being posted there. Always interested in the question of composition and writing in electronic spaces, Arroyo was drawn to the internet in general, and YouTube specifically, fascinated by the way that online environments "relentlessly prompt participation, encourage collaboration, and quite literally connect us in ways not even possible five years earlier" (Arroyo). Positing that such connectedness surely must impact writing in terms of both form and content, Arroyo began to explore the potential such electronic spaces provided for college writing and new forms of compositional texts. Arroyo also observed that social media platforms like YouTube offered students opportunities to be involved in "civic engagement, community building, and participation" (Arroyo).

Like Shipka, Arroyo also returned to a moment in the history of Composition in her search for the answer to her questions concerning teaching technology in a Composition classroom; however, for Arroyo, the historical moment did not center on the journey of the field of Composition itself, but on the development of a theory within the field of Composition, that of electracy, a theory of cultural apparatus put forth by literacy scholar Gregory Ulmer. Descriptions of electracy look to anticipate the next paradigmatic shift in communication apparatus from literacy to electracy, with the desire being to describe the abilities needed to exploit the full range of communicative potential of modern electronic media (Ulmer). Arroyo's "what-if" involved asking what would have happened if Gregory Ulmer had not developed the theory of electracy through writing with hypertext, but rather had instead developed it through video, as he initially envisioned it in his 1989 book *Teletheory*. This "what-if" idea of privileging video over hypertext was also influenced by Arroyo's engagement with the video platform YouTube, which also led her to incorporate Jenkins theory about participatory culture, culminating in what Arroyo called videocy (video + electracy), and a pedagogical approach she identifies as Participatory Composition. This pedagogical approach to writing foregrounds, for Arroyo, the inventive, playful and juxtapositional nature of electracy with the "added layer of sharing, networking and participating that Ulmer could not entirely foresee" and is found in participatory culture (Arroyo).

Although my research interests fall in line in many ways with Shipka's, my interests more closely align with those of Arroyo in our shared focus on composing in electronic environments, and in our interest in participatory culture in online communities. Unlike Arroyo, however, my interest in digital composition is not in

regards to what the future of digital literacy could look like, but rather in what I already see going on and how my present observations can inform the core WPA values, etc, that I already believe to be important. I also deviate from Arroyo in that I derive my observations not just from one particular social media platform (for Arroyo this is YouTube), but rather from the whole range of social media platforms and activities engaged in online.

Considering the work of Shipka and Arroyo together, I too am interested in questions surrounding the way writing and composing is impacted by new media technology, as well as the way they are impacted by social and cultural influences. Like Shipka and Arroyo, I too believe that any pedagogical approach to teaching composition in this digital age must combine traditional literacies with new media literacies, and not merely replace one with the other. And like Shipka and Arroyo, I too have a historical moment I return to in my examination of the way composition theory has tried to account for the influence of new media technology and the subsequent influences in the teaching of writing. For me, however, this moment is rooted in the history of the WPA Outcome statement and the emphasis of the social and collaborative nature of writing, something that appears to be waning in the latest WPA OS (version 3.0.), or at the very least is not being emphasized at a time when clearly the role of the social and the collaborative is burgeoning in digital writing environments.

In the previous section I have shown how my work in this paper addresses many similar questions that Shipka's and Arroyo's work also seek to address, and I have pointed out where my work deviates from theirs. By way of illustrating more clearly the related, but critically different work my pedagogical approach addresses, I will now look

at two assignments, one derived from Shipka's pedagogy and one derived from Arroyo's, and then show how these same assignments would be changed to accommodate a Participatory Design approach. I do this not to privilege my pedagogical approach over theirs, but rather as a source of comparison, and as a way to show how my pedagogy might inform, and be informed by, theirs.

In *Towards a Composition Made Whole*, Shipka describes an exercise given to students after they had turned in a written assignment. In the exercise Shipka asks them to draw the physical space in which they composed the text, and then to draw the process of how they composed and created that same text (Shipka). According to Shipka, the point of the exercise was to foreground the physical and psychological mediational tools the students employed in the creation and composition of their text. In the drawings, it became clear that when looked at in terms of the sociocultural, mediational tools, the 'invisible' was foregrounded, made evident; students began to see how the text was mediated through such sociocultural tools as the help of friends' suggestions, through musical inspiration on the radio, through computer databases, etc.

If I were to assign this exercise, but altered to reflect Participatory Design, I would follow a similar procedure, however I would:

- ask students to include in their drawings where specifically they had gotten their inspiration
- which internet sites they used
- how their ideas were formed and from which images or sources their reference material had come from
- who impacted them

- which online communities helped to supply and develop the image or information they used, especially if the previously handed in composition had been an altered or originating text, be it Fanart, or spreadable image

In regards to reflecting on an ARG they had played, for another example, I would direct the students to focus not only on the mediational tools they had used, but also to explore where the game-play information came from, and how bits of news, clues or puzzle solutions had been derived, be it from their own minds or from group collaboration, ie how the students had determined the relevance of the respective pieces of data. The point of these alterations to the assignment would be to help students focus on the ways that the social and collaborative nature of participatory communities had impacted, influenced and/or contributed to their compositions.

In regards to Arroyo, in her book *Participatory Composition*, Arroyo outlined an assignment entitled MEMEmorials and patterned after Ulmer's suggested assignment MEMemorials (Arroyo). Arroyo's version of the assignment, MEMEmorial, was designed to foreground the associative, juxtapositional logic and inventive nature of "electrate" writing (Arroyo). Students are required to choose a 'viral' video from YouTube, be it an originating meme or an altered version. They are then required first to explore various aspects of the ideas and themes behind the video, and then to remix or recreate the video in their own way, and in the process foreground a new or different aspect of the original video. Once completed, the students are required to upload their new versions to YouTube. The point of the assignment is for students to compose an electrate composition, and to encourage them to engage in invention and juxtapositional logic. Another point is for students to explore how memes often engage in questions of social

and cultural significance, and to participate in the creation and dissemination of texts within a participatory community.

In repurposing this assignment to reflect Participatory Design pedagogy, the parameters of the assignment would remain remarkably similar, especially because it is already based upon memes, an element of spreadable media. I would require students basically to do the same as Arroyo's version: to remake a meme after first exploring the various elements of the meme and the social and cultural issues it raised. Where I would alter the assignment is that I would add into the students' exploration of the meme's elements such details as where individual elements came from; a trace of the meme's circulatory history, and possible intertextual meanings of the individual elements. I would then require the students to remake the text in a different medium, and to upload the altered text to a site devoted to this different medium (eg from a video on YouTube, to a story on Fanfiction.net or into a spreadable image on Deviantart.com). I would also give this assignment earlier in the semester, and then make a follow up assignment to return to the altered text on the new platform, and to analyze the way their texts had been viewed, used and/or disseminated throughout the site via such platform elements as feedback comments, views, 'likes', remixes, etc. The point of such alterations to Arroyo's MEMEmorial assignment would be to factor in a more nuanced and in-depth exploration of the social and collaborative life of texts within participatory communities.

These two example assignments are not meant to represent a detailed outline of my Participatory Design pedagogy, nor are they meant to offer a full and accurate description of either Shipka's sociocultural, mediational approach to composition, nor Arroyo's Participatory Composition. Rather, these brief examples are meant to be a point

of comparison between aspects of their research and pedagogy, and mine; to better illustrated the parallels and points of departure from our three approaches to the question of what new media literacies and teaching with technology looks like in a new media age.

My research has shown me that many questions still remain, and so I would like to offer a series of questions and possible directions for further research that my work has raised. Based on the brief comparison between the work of Shipka, Arroyo and myself, how can my pedagogical approach be extended to encompass Shipka's more expanded sense of technology and materiality? If participatory culture as a whole was examined as a sociocultural mediational tool in and of itself, how would that inform both Shipka's work and my own? How would it inform or detract from Jenkins' understanding of participatory culture? In regards to Arroyo's work, how can I expand my pedagogical approach to include more specific elements of electracy and videocy? How does focusing on one particular social media platform potentially limit and/or expand my own understanding of participatory culture and online communities?

Going back to my derivation of the term Participatory Design, how does the New London Group's (NLG) original understanding of Design pedagogy inform my own use of Design pedagogy? Since the original article published in 1996, two NLG members, Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, have since fleshed out the ideas behind Design pedagogy into a more nuanced pedagogical approach, which they call Literacies. How does Literacies pedagogy inform my own approach, and vice versa. How does it compare to and inform Shipka's and Arroyo's pedagogies?

For these next series of questions for further research, I am putting aside questions of pedagogical approaches, and focusing more on specific aspects of my analysis of three

types of spreadable media through the lens of the combination of the WPA Outcomes Statement (WPA OS) and Jenkins et al's Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs). I am convinced that PCAs are important abilities for students to learn, and that the composition classroom is particularly suited to teach them because of the close parallels between the WPA OS and the eleven PCAs. What would the WPA OS look like if it were more informed by the PCAs? How can the social and collaborative elements of the PCAs be reflected in the WPA OS? In light of the burgeoning presence of participatory culture activities and the texts created in and through them, how can the WPA OS be modified to reflect this growing aspect of digital compositions?

In teaching students to become empowered researchers in digital environments, how can we incorporate the kinds of traditionally non-academic research practices into our curricula so that students will be able to navigate and participate in all forms of knowledge creation and dissemination? How can, and also should, non-traditional documentation and citation practices found in participatory communities be incorporated into the kinds of citation practices we presently teach in Composition, and practice in academia? And lastly, how can, or indeed should, aspects of intertextuality be foregrounded in the composition process? What role, if any, should puzzles and cognitive abilities be used as motivational elements in the FYC curricula?

Although I haven't answered all of my questions, I am convinced that, based on my research, we should work towards incorporating Spreadable Media and Participatory Design pedagogy into the composition classroom. Incorporating these will lead to innovative pedagogical practices that foster agency and engagement in students towards their writing. It will inform and facilitate the achievement of the Writing Program

Administrators' outcomes; and it will support the learning of a set of participatory culture abilities that will help students to become conscious, responsible and empowered users of their rhetorical power in digital environments.

APPENDIX A—Fan made poster vs. original poster



Fan made *Snakes on a Plane* movie poster (left) and original movie poster of the 1980 movie *Airplane* (right)

APPENDIX B—Examples of the three groups of spreadable media texts.



B.1

B.2



B.3



APPENDIX C—The eleven Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs)

Participatory Culture Ability	Definition of Ability
Play	The capacity to experiment with the surroundings as a form of solving
Performance	The ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery
Simulation	The ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes
Appropriation	The ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content
Multitasking	The ability to scan the environment and shift focus onto salient details
Distributed Cognition	The ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities
Collective Intelligence	The ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal
Judgment	The ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources
Transmedia Navigation	The ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities
Networking	The ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information
Negotiation	The ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms

APPENDIX D—The WPA Outcome Statement v 2.0**Rhetorical Knowledge**

- a. Focus on a purpose
- b. Respond to the needs of different audiences
- c. Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- d. Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- e. Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- f. Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- g. Write in several genres

Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing

- h. Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- i. Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- j. Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- k. Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Processes

- l. Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- m. Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- n. Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- o. Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- p. Learn to critique their own and others' works
- q. Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- r. Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Knowledge of Conventions

- s. Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- t. Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- u. Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- v. Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Composing in Electronic Environments

- w. Use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts
- x. Locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources, including scholarly library databases; other official databases (e.g., federal government databases); and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- y. Understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts

APPENDIX E—Discussion of WPA Outcomes vs. PCAsPlay, Simulation and Performance*Play*

Of all the Participatory Culture abilities, Play seems, at least on the surface, to have the least correlation with the WPA OS; however, Play as understood by Jenkins et al. is different from the generally understood concept of ‘play’ as a source of fun. Rather, they see Play as a form of ‘active engagement’ (40). When people play video games, for example, much of the play they perform is not ‘fun’ and ‘pleasurable’ at that precise moment, but is more along the lines of tedious work. The effort involved lets the player grow in mastery of skills, or gather in-game resources, etc, all in anticipation of a “payoff down the line” (Jenkins et al. 37). When we look at play in this sense, as active engagement, people are actually encouraged to put in the work because of a ‘payoff’ or end goal that is meaningful to them personally. This active engagement facilitates the individual “focus[ing] on a purpose,” a criterion in the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge (CWPA).

Understanding that Play in the context of the PCA is not one of ‘fun and amusement’ but rather ‘active engagement’, Jenkins et al. specifically define Play as the ability to “experiment with the surroundings as a form of problem solving” (35). This idea of Play inspires “risk taking” and “experimentation,” and sees the practice and processes of problem-solving as equally, if not more so, significant as finding the solution. Experimentation is inherent in throughout the WPA OS, for example in the plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing in that students are experimenting when they “use writing for inquiry, learning, [and] thinking.” We see experimentation again in

the WPA OS plank Processes. This plank foregrounds the teaching of students to realize that “it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text”, and that because composing texts is a process of experimentation and iterative refinement, it is also “an open process that permits [individuals] to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work” (WPA OS). This principle of ‘writing as a process’ versus ‘writing as a finite product’ is essentially writing as experimentation; it is writing as Play. According to Jenkins et al., Play “lowers the emotional stakes of failing” and encourages “failure through risk” (38), something that encourages not only multiple drafts of a text, but also one that fosters student attempts to incorporate perhaps new and, to them, unfamiliar conventions in the composing processes. In writing, for example, this could mean opening up a space for students to incorporate rhetorical strategies that account for the needs of their audience (found in the plank Rhetorical Knowledge), or unfamiliar genre specific conventions (e.g. formatting and structure, etc., as found in the plank Knowledge of Conventions), or even experimentation with different types of medium and technology (found in the plank Composing in Electronic Environments (CEE)), all elements of writing and rhetoric that are foregrounded in the WPA OS.

Simulation

The two other PCAs that go hand in hand with Play seem equally unconnected to the WPA OS, although unlike Play their definitions are more in keeping with our general understanding of the terms. Whereas Jenkins et al.’s emphasis of Play is on experimentation and active engagement, their emphasis of Simulation is on the individual’s “ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes” (41). I argue that in order for individuals to “interpret and construct” models or instances

of “real-world processes” and practices, they must first have at least a rudimentary understanding of the conventions and generic elements typical of those processes, an understanding that they will develop, if not master, through constructing the model themselves. When applied to the “real-world processes” of writing as identified in the WPA OS, this becomes true for developing an understanding of different audiences, rhetorical situations, voice and genres of Rhetorical Knowledge; the common formats and features identified in Knowledge of Conventions; and the “differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing” of the plank CEE.

In addition, when applying the constructing of Simulation and the experimentation of Play in the context of writing and composing, individuals also begin to develop an “understanding of the relationship between language, knowledge and power” promoted by the WPA OS in the plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing. With the rise of new media, there is a rise in powerful new methods of depicting and manipulating data, and new opportunities to construct and experiment with more and more complex sets of information through sophisticated and real-world models and simulations. Learning through such models and hands-on data manipulation increases the kinds of experiences people can have, allowing them the ability to tweak variables and refine hypotheses in a way that would be impossible or impractical in the real world (Jenkins et al.). Learning then becomes a process of trial and error, something students frequently find more engaging than more traditional methods of knowledge representation. When this gets applied to writing and composing texts, individuals can

begin to see more directly the interplay between “language, knowledge and power” (CWPA).

Performance

Like Play and Simulation, Performance encompasses several criteria throughout the WPA OS planks. And whereas Play emphasizes the concept of experimentation, and Simulation emphasizes construction, Performance emphasizes improvisation. Jenkins et al. define Performance as “the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery” (47). The ability to role-play, i.e. the capacity to take on roles other than those one is used to adopting, is particularly important when trying to understand and be sensitive to the needs of a specific audience, a skill critical for rhetorical effectiveness as described in the WPAO skills category Rhetorical Knowledge. When a writer ‘role-plays’ as their audience, they gain a sense of their audiences’ needs and points of view. The writer also develops an understanding of the kind of voice and tone needed to connect with that audience, abilities crucial to engaging the audience rhetorically. This kind of improvisation also promotes the idea of ‘spur of the moment thought,’ an element inherent in the brainstorming and freewriting encouraged as “flexible strategies for generating” ideas, as promoted in the WPA OS plank Processes, and “use writing and reading for inquiry, learning and thinking” as promoted in Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing.

Performance also foregrounds the social and collaborative aspect of Participatory Cultures, and of creating and circulating texts within them. When an individual performs, they are performing *for* someone, *for* an audience. We have considered how Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing; and Processes are encompassed in

Performance through role-playing, and how this facilitates the development of the writer from an individual perspective. These same aspects of the WPA OS are encompassed in Performance when considering those same criteria through the lens of writing not as an autonomous writer, but this time through the lens of writing as “collaborative and social” (CWPA). So on multiple levels, the Performance PCA is encompassed throughout the WPA OS. And when Performance is coupled with Play and Simulation, these three PCAs reflect core qualities of the WPA OS that promote foundational principles of the writing process, such as generating ideas, brainstorming, freewriting, crafting multiple drafts, and incorporating key rhetorical features in a text.

Appropriation, Multitasking, and Transmedia Navigation

The three PCAs in the previous section—Play, Simulation and Performance—are not only directly comparable to several criteria of the WPA OS, as we have seen, but can also aid in the writing process as a whole in terms generating ideas at the initial stages of writing, and also throughout in the actual crafting of the written text through foregrounding different rhetorical strategies and aspects to be considered, as well as facilitating the crafting of multiple drafts, and of recognizing that the writing process is indeed an open-ended process, one that can be returned to time and again to re-invent and revise. These next three PCAs also useful techniques to keep in mind once the individual has an idea and needs to research and discover what they want to say, what can support their argument, and what others have said about the subject. And again, like the previous three PCAs, these next PCAs are also parallel to multiple criteria found in the WPA OS planks.

Appropriation

According to Jenkins et al., Appropriation is identified as the capacity to purposefully and thoughtfully “sample and remix” the existing content of the media they encounter, (e.g. images, film or television clips, music, etc). Essentially, the ability of Appropriation is the “process by which students learn by taking culture apart and putting it back together” (55). What raises this ability above the simple “cut and paste” mechanical and technical competency is the key word ‘meaningfully’. Many people can cut and paste, and technically would be “appropriating” as the term is generally understood; however, “meaningfully” changes the concept for Jenkins et al., and elevates the ability above the simple mechanical skill of “cut and paste”. The emphasis of “meaningfully” is also what links this PCA to the WPA OS in general, and the Rhetorical Knowledge plank specifically. In particular this is true for the WPA OS criteria “understand how genres shape reading and writing,” and in understanding and responding to “different kinds of rhetorical situations” because the idea of “meaningfully” is what gives a simple cut and paste technique a sophisticated and deliberate rhetorical purpose ie. what make the PCA Appropriation evidence of rhetorical knowledge and not just technical proficiency.

Appropriation also connects with the WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing in in the integration of “their own ideas with those of others,” indeed using the ‘ideas’ and elements of others’ texts and manipulating them and ‘remixing’ them to convey the individual’s own ideas, be they similar or even completely opposite. An individual needs to be aware of and understand the ideas of others being communicated in a piece for the student to ‘meaningfully sample and remix’ those often disparate

elements together into an originating piece that “meaningfully” conveys their own ideas and thoughts. Appropriation also underscores the principle that any “writing assignment is a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing” sources, something that may not be immediately obvious in a more traditional written composition.

The WPA OS plank Processes is also strongly represented in the PCA concept of Appropriation. Recognizing that in some circumstances and for some genres, ‘appropriation’ is a valid way of composing is to foreground the idea that the composing process is “an open process,” one that “permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise” work, be it their own or aspects of others. It also foregrounds the social nature of writing in that it concretely shows how our own ideas are influenced and shaped by the social context that they are formulated in. It also shows that even when they don’t seem to be directly related, still our ideas and thoughts are in some way derived in ‘collaboration’ with those of others.

Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation

The way in which the WPA OS encompasses these next two PCAs, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation, is very similar and so it is easier to discuss these two abilities together. Indeed, their definitions are also similar, yet each as a subtle but distinctly different emphasis. As defined by Jenkins et al., Multitasking is “the ability to scan the environment and shift focus onto salient details” (61), and Transmedia Navigation is “the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities” (85). These two PCAs are another example of terms that Jenkins et al. use slightly different ways than they are generally used. Multitasking usually implies doing

many different tasks at one time; however, in the context of the PCAs, Multitasking refers to the ability to identify and pick out patterns of information from a sea of sources. What is particularly misleading for me is that the Jenkins et al.'s definition seems to foreground the idea of "environment" (ie. multiple or 'multi-' environments), when in actuality the emphasis of this term is actually "salient details", ie pieces of information or text or data that connects to the larger pattern the individual is 'scanning for'. Jenkins et al.'s definition of Transmedia Navigation is also misleading to me, because it seems to emphasize the "flow of stories and information", when in actuality the emphasis of this term is actually on "multiple modalities". In essence, Multitasking deals with an individual's ability pick out related pieces of information from a sea of sources, an Transmedia Navigation deals with an individual's ability to deal with, or 'navigate,' many different types of media in the search for information.

In order to utilize Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation PCAs, individuals must have a clear purpose in mind as they navigate the flow of information across different media, examine the different sources they encounters, and pick out the pertinent data in each case. Such an ability requires individuals to develop a "method of monitoring and responding to the sea of information around" them (63), all the while being "focus[ed] on a purpose" as they are inundated with data (CWPA), this kind of focus being promoted by the WPA OS plank Rhetorical Knowledge, be it identifying "salient information" in a sea of sources (Multitasking), or being able to switch seamlessly between different types of media (Transmedia Navigation).

Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation are also encompassed in another WPA OS plank, that of Knowledge of Conventions. In order for individuals to pick out relevant

data from a sea of sources, and to switch effortlessly between different types of media, they must first have a firm grasp of the various conventions, formats, genres, and rhetorical situations inherent in different types of texts and media. Individuals must first have internalized the rhetorical impact these differences afford texts in order to be able to quickly and accurately locate ‘salient information’ across ‘multiple modalities’. Individuals also need to be able to keep track of, and document correctly, the sources from which the information came, be it so they can correctly document the source for someone else, or even simply for their own self reference, again foregrounding an aspect of the composition process promoted by the WPA OS.

The WPA OS plank of Composing in Electronic Environments (CEE) is also of note here in how Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation are encompassed in it. Although it is generally understood that all the PCAs take place in electronic environments, Multitask and Transmedia Navigation are specifically parallel to the CEE criteria “locate, evaluate, organize, and use research material collected from electronic sources” and “understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies and in the affordances available for both print and electronic composing processes and texts.” This last criterion is particularly worth emphasizing in relation to Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation because it directly mentions the ability to “exploit the differences in rhetorical strategies” in both “print and electronic” media. Individuals evidence their ability to “exploit the differences in rhetorical strategies” of different media when they are able to survey and hone in on ‘salient’ and relevant information from a sea of different types of texts, and as they ‘navigate’ quickly from medium to medium in the process.

When individuals engage in all three of these PCAs—Appropriation, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation—individuals are also engaging in the composing process at the stage of composing where authors explore how their ideas relate to and connect with those of others through searching out and referencing primary and secondary resources. These three abilities are what individuals need to be able participate as an empowered individuals in conversations and exchanges taking place in the general population.

Networking and Negotiation

The previous three PCAs—Appropriation, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation—are essentially accomplished by solitary individuals independently composing texts. When students are engaged in electronic and online environments, however, they are continuously surrounded by online and participatory communities. No longer are their solitary researchers digging alone through racks of card catalogues housed in libraries. Now individuals need to navigate not only through online databases and digital archives, but also through Internet communities who generate and archive information. This is where the PCAs of Networking and Negotiation come in, and where the WPA OS criterion “understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” can be emphasized and expanded.

The previously discussed PCAs Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation involve independent researchers interacting with non-sentient tools. The PCAs Networking and Negotiation involve the same researchers using the same research abilities as the prior two PCAs but to interact instead with online communities. Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation foreground research abilities in traditional, autonomous situations. Networking and Negotiation, however, foreground research abilities in more social

situations. Again as discussed previously, the WPA OS encompasses the PCAs of Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation, especially in the planks Rhetorical Knowledge, Knowledge of Conventions, and CEE. The WPA OS also encompasses the PCAs of Networking and Negotiation in the same way as it encompasses Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation, and for the same reasons.

Networking

What separates the first two from the second two is the aspect of the social, primarily as found in the WPA OS plank of Processes. Jenkins et al. define Networking as “the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information” (91). The thrust of Networking involves the ability to travel seamlessly between online communities. “If Transmedia Navigation involves learning to understand the relations between different media systems, Networking involves the ability to navigate across different social communities” (93). The WPA OS plank of Processes embodies this “social and collaborative aspect” of research, an important stage of the writing process. Two other Processes criteria come in to play as well: being able to critique to work of others, as well as being able to find a balance between relying on the work of others with the responsibility of doing your. Being able to navigate with ease between various online communities involves individuals understanding how different communities construct knowledge, and to critique how knowledge is archived and circulated within said communities. It also constantly reinforces the need to evaluate the place of collaborative work in relation to single-author texts. In this way, Networking accounts for the social and collaborative aspect of research, and of how knowledge and information are social constructed, synthesized and archived, elements crucial to the WPA OS.

Networking is also a crucial part of the WPA OS plank CEE, especially in regards to using “electronic environments for...sharing texts” (CWPA). In participatory and online communities, however, being able to distribute information and disseminate texts is a foundational component of being a facilitative and empowered community member. Networking includes knowing how to disseminate the information and knowledge found so that it can most effectively reach target audiences and those to whom the information would be most useful. Knowing which social networks to tap into, and/or which social media tools to best employ to get the ideas or knowledge into the hands of the target audience falls under the dissemination aspect of Networking (Jenkins et al.). In this way, Networking is a key social component of the WPA OS plank CEE.

Negotiation

In Networking is the ability to travel quickly and easily between different types of communities online in search of information, Negotiation is the ability to interact constructively with those communities. According to Jenkins et al, the PCA of Negotiation involves being able to move between disparate communities, perceiving and respecting different, often multiple viewpoints and perceptions, and understanding and following alternative norms (Jenkins et al.). The emphasis here is on how individuals behave once they begin to interact with members of the different communities online. As mentioned before, just like Networking, the PCA Negotiation is encompassed within the WPA OS planks Rhetorical Knowledge and Knowledge of Conventions in the same ways and for the same reasons.

As it is with Networking, the emphasis of the PCA Negotiation is on the social and the collaborative. The WPA OS acknowledges that writing has a collaborative and

social nature, and encourages individuals to engage in this element of writing when appropriate, and in that sense Negotiation is also embedded in the WPA OS plank Processes. What Negotiation can add to the WPA, however, is an expanded sense of collaboration in that this PCA recognizes the importance of developing interpersonal abilities in regards to interacting within collaborative and social groups. Jenkins et al. identify two distinct but related aspects of Negotiation: first, the capacity to “negotiate through diverse communities;” and second, the capacity to “negotiate[e] between dissenting perspectives” (Jenkins et al. 99). The ability to “actively listen” to others and to engender “mutual respect” is at the heart of the Writing and Composition field, but an assumption not specifically laid forth in the WPA OS, except where it promotes the “collaborative and social aspects of writing” (CWPA). By foregrounding the more specific interpersonal abilities needed to “negotiate” among and between online communities, the PCA of Negotiation can help engender the sharing of knowledge and collaboration in our diverse, multicultural society, and help facilitate the WPA OS ‘s overall goal helping individuals become empowered and effective communicators. (Jenkins et al.; CWPA)

The PCAs Networking and Negotiation are the social elements needed to accompany the research criteria of the WPA OS when that research takes place in online and digitally linked communities, especially when connected together through social media. These two abilities help develop individuals mindful of the multicultural diversity of our culture, and of the constructed nature of knowledge and language, as well as assist in facilitating the facilitate the social and collaborative aspects of the writing process as a whole, components that are foundational to the WPA OS.

Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition and Judgment

The PCAs Networking and Negotiation are embedded in the social aspects of the WPA OS, especially in the Processes plank criterion “understanding the social and collaborative aspects of writing processes” (CWPA). These next three PCAs are also embedded in this same WPA OS criterion. The key difference, however, is that whereas Networking and Negotiation foreground the social aspects of writing processes, the next three PCAs—Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition and Judgment—foreground the collaborative aspects of writing processes.

Collective Intelligence

Collective Intelligence, as a term, was first coined and identified by Pierre Levy in his 2000 book *Collective Intelligence: Mankind’s Emerging World in Cyberspace*, arguing that in an online community, “everyone knows something, nobody knows everything, and what any one person knows can be tapped by the group as a whole” (Jenkins et al. 71). For Jenkins et al, Collective Intelligence refers to the capacity to “pool knowledge and share notes” with other community members for the purpose of achieving a shared goal (xiv), and as such, this PCA emphasizes the collaborative aspect of research and knowledge construction. Like several other PCAs, such as Multitasking and Performance, Collective Intelligence displays evidence of Rhetorical Knowledge not because individuals produce texts that display rhetorical strategies such “responding to the needs of different audiences,” etc., but rather because in order to exercise Collective Intelligence, individuals must first recognize and have an understanding of Rhetorical Knowledge. In addition, as the individuals interact with others, pooling knowledge and comparing notes, all the while they must be working “towards a common goal” ie

“focus[ed] on a purpose,” both at an individual level and also at a collaborative level, clearly evidencing Rhetorical Knowledge.

The WPA OS plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing is also evidenced through the PCA Collective Intelligence. Individuals must practice “integrating their own ideas with those of others” as they come together with others and pool their knowledge. Further, because they are interacting with others in the online communities primarily through social media, individuals almost invariably must use “writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking AND communicating”, with special emphasis on “communicating” (CWPA). Although less obvious, I would argue that through being part of such an online ‘collective intelligence’, with many people all collaborating together and focusing on a common purpose, this exposure to relationships and information through reading and writing, individuals almost by close association begin to gain a sense of the interplay between “language, knowledge and power”, yet another criterion of the plank Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing.

The final WPA OS plank in which the PCA Collective Intelligence is embedded in is CEE, not just because the participatory cultures we are exploring are hosted in online and electronic environments, but also because of the social element of “locating, evaluating, organizing and using” research material online. The PCA Collective Intelligence, at its core, *is* locating, evaluating, organizing and using information, including what the WPA understands as “research material”, “informal electronic networks” and “internet sources”. The key element that the Collective Intelligence emphasizes is the collaborative nature of researching and information gathering, rather than the lone, autonomous researcher.

Distributed Cognition

As Jenkins et al. define it, the PCA of Distributed Cognition is “the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities” (65). At first glance it may seem again totally unrelated to the WPA OS, primarily because of the term “tool”; however, even if we defined “tools” as specifically technology, or even more specifically as digital technology, still the ‘tool’ of writing is encompassed in this definition, be it with the ‘tools’ of paper and pencil, or with the digital ‘tool’ of *Microsoft Word*. An unstated assumption of the WPA Outcomes Collective is that that writing is a tool that expands mental capacities, as evidenced in their Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing criterion “use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking and communicating.” This criterion reveals an underling belief that reading and writing are tools that expand mental capacities, and that it is part of a Composition teacher’s job to help students ‘meaningfully interact’ with writing and reading. As a result, the PCA of Distributed Cognition is clearly embedded within the WPA OS.

The WPA OS plank Processes also encompasses Distributed Cognition. The use of “tools that expand mental capacity” would fall under the criterion to “develop flexible strategies for generating” written texts, indeed all forms of composition. Another Processes criterion in which Distributed Cognition is encompasses is in regards to the collaborative nature of “mental capacity,” in sense that it is knowledge spread out across many things, even people. “Distributed cognition is not simply about technologies; it is also about tapping social institutions and practices or remote experts whose knowledge may be useful in solving a particular problem” (Jenkins et al. 67). Distributed Cognition involves the collaborative in the sense that people and experts can be ‘tools that expand

mental capacities' i.e. experts that can be called upon and their particular knowledge set 'accessed' so to speak. In that sense, individuals "understand [another form of] the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes" (CWPA).

This idea of "tools that expand mental capacity", interestingly enough, connects directly to the fifth WPA OS plank CEE. This plank foregrounds the use of databases, electronic environments, various research material sources, even including individual experts (as discussed in the previous paragraph). For Jenkins and his colleagues, the key to Distributed Cognition is "having expertise somewhere within the distributed learning environment and making sure students understand how to access and deploy it" (68), a sentiment that is clearly expressed throughout the CEE plank criteria. In this respect, there is a clear and direct intersection between the PCA Distributed Cognition, and the WPA OS plank CEE. It is the task of ensuring that individuals 'understand how to access and deploy' this expertise that is the emphasis for both the PCA Distributed Cognition and the WPA OS plank CEE.

Judgment

Whereas the PCAs Collective Intelligence and Distributed Cognition clearly are abilities that are involved primarily in collaborative and social situations, Judgment is a PCA that is involved equally on a social and collaborative level or an individual level. Judgment, as used by Jenkins et al., is ability to determine the dependability and trustworthiness of various sources of information. Jenkins et al's understanding of Judgment is very much in line with the WPA's sense of the word 'judgment' implied in terms such as "evaluating", "reviewing" and "critiqu[ing]" found throughout the WPA OS; however, because of the added element of Judgment within a social and collaborative

context, not just in a lone environment, the PCA Judgment also adds a social dimension to the evaluation process. For example, in a participatory community, the community as a whole weighs in on the vetting process of a piece of information or on the reliability of a source, and so in this collaborative context, the PCA Judgment also involves understanding how the collaborative group as a whole judges a source over and above how the individual may judge it. The individual may personally judge the source reliable, for example, but if the group as a whole does not, then the individual must treat the source accordingly to account for the collaborative element of the PCA Judgment.

The WPA OS plank Processes also encompasses the PCA Judgment, both in regards to the criterion “understanding the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes” as well as the criterion “learn to critique their own and others’ work.” Certainly on an independent level individuals must learn to judge and evaluate the merits of texts, be it their own work or that of others; however, in the context of a collaborative group, such as an online or participatory community, individuals need to be able to not just the work or texts in themselves, but in terms of evaluating and critiquing the work as overall contributions to the group as a whole, eg learning to evaluate the work in context of how it supports and facilitates the goals of the group as a whole rather than on the merit of the individual text.

These last three PCAs—Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, and Judgment—are closely related to the PCAs Appropriation, Multitasking and Transmedia Navigation in that the Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition and Judgment are the collaborative equivalent of the other three. These three PCAs in essence accomplish the same goals but collaboratively. This also means that, just like the previous three

PCAs, individuals engage Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, and Judgment in the composing process at the stage of composing where authors explore how their ideas relate to and connect with those of others. The key difference between the prior three PCAs and the three under discussion in this section is that the prior PCAs are used in the context of the independent researcher, whereas Collective Intelligence, Distributed Cognition, and Judgment are used in the context of collaborative and group research.

In both cases, Networking and Negotiation are needed as the “social glue” or the interpersonal group-oriented social skills to function in participatory and online group environments. And as with all the PCAs the Jenkins et al. identified, as we have discussed, the WPA OS encompasses these abilities throughout the five planks Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing; Processes; Knowledge of Conventions; and Composing in Electronic Environments.

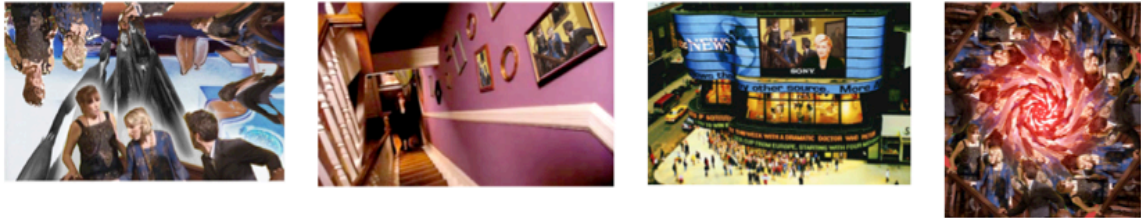
APPENDIX F—Fanart from a *Doctor Who* forum thread post

F.1 -- Originating image and a few of the Altered images that were posted subsequently



(Originating image)

F.2 -- Some Altered texts that are examples of fans understanding composing as an open process and using “innovation and re-thinking” (CWPA)



F.3 -- Example of a “conversation” within the thread, progressing from left to right



APPENDIX G—Examples of spreadable image Fanworks



G.1 – Example of demotivation posters: general (left); *Sherlock* fandom (center); *Supernatural* fandom (right)



G.2 – Examples of Face Swaps: general (left); *Doctor Who* fandom (center); *Sherlock* fandom (right)



G.3 – Examples of Anti-jokes: general (left); *Supernatural* fandom (center); *Sherlock* fandom (right)



G.4 – Example of individuals manipulating multiple layer of conventions: general (left); *Supernatural* fandom (center); *Doctor Who* fandom (right)

APPENDIX H—Example of SuperWhoLock text with constituent elements



Example of a SuperWhoLock text created by NkyQT (top right), with examples of the different elements amalgamated to create the text. From top left (going counterclockwise) *Supernatural* opening titles; *Doctor Who* opening titles; *Sherlock* opening titles; profile of *Sherlock* actor Benedict Cumberbatch; the Doctor's TARDIS; a devil's trap, and an angel sigil (painted on the TARDIS) commonly used in *Supernatural*

APPENDIX I—Example of *Doctor Who* Fanart

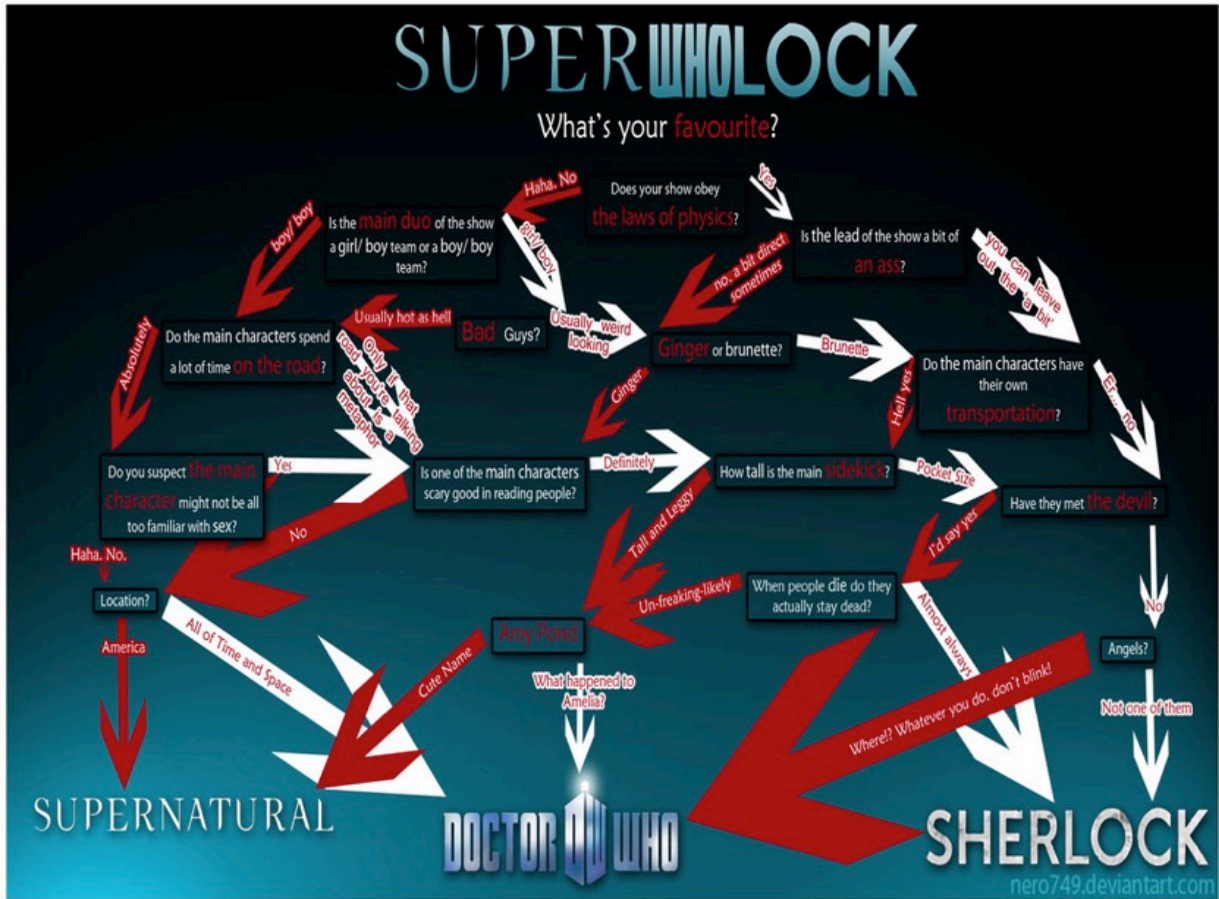


 COMPANIONS 

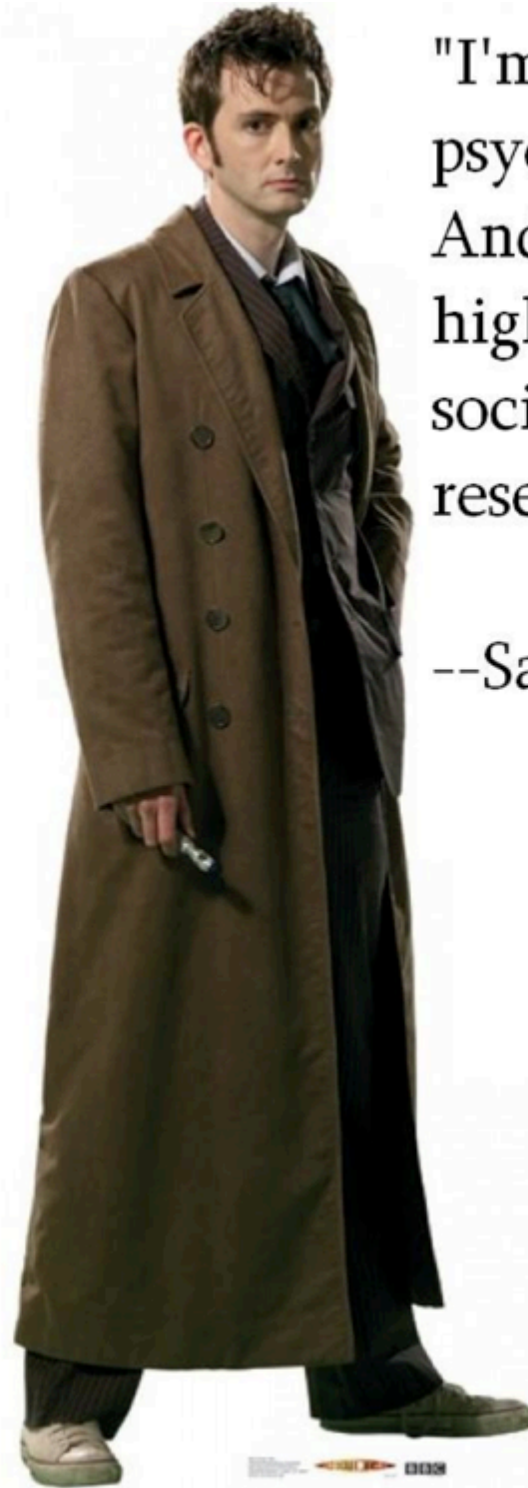
APPENDIX J—Fanart entitled “All About SuperWhoLock”



APPENDIX K—SuperWhoLock Fanart



APPENDIX L—SuperWhoLock troll quote



"I'm not a psychopath, Anderson, I'm a high-functioning sociopath, do your research."

--Sam Winchester

APPENDIX M—Excerpt from Chapter 4 of “World on Fire” by ElocinMuse

"The Men of Letters did say that the only thing strong enough to *kill a Knight is the weapon used by the archangels to destroy them,*" Sam muttered, scanning over the parchment in his hand for clues.

"Yeah, well we're gettin' nowhere with this shit," Dean grated, shoving at a stack of books which toppled over onto the floor. "Following dead ends for months when that pompous prick was searching for *decades*. *We have a good lead, Sam.*"

"Yeah, going off the word of Crowley."

Dean began to pace, not unlike a lion in a cage. "He wants the bitch dead as much as we do. And as much as he might be a giant rectal orifice with legs, he wouldn't lie about this."

Sam laughed without humor, shaking his head. "*Some lackey of Crowley's gets wind of a protégé of Abaddon's who claimed knowledge of the First Blade.* Yeah, that doesn't sound shady at all."

"Crowley said Dad *nabbed the protégé*, and he was *right*." Dean held up their father's journal between them to cement his point, then tossed it angrily across the table at his brother so that it skidded to a stop in front of him. "It says so *right there*, and there's a code in the margin for one of his storage lockers. *We need to get to that unit.*"

Sam ran a hand over his mouth, sensing with great regret that this was to become toilsome. "Dean, that storage locker is on the other side of the *country*."

Dean circled back around, shaking his head as though it were nothing. "We'll take Cas, demon bitch number two, and a handful of men—whoever's willing, or just the four of us."

Sam was staring at him as though he'd completely lost his mind. "It's a suicide mission."

Dean looked him dead in the eye. "*It's the First Blade, Sam. It's killing Abaddon.*"

The older Winchester's face had taken on the form of a masked thundercloud, banked fury lurking in every harsh line and stark shadow under the muted light. He looked utterly made of stone, and as unfeeling as it, too.

Sam faced the cold bulwark of his brother's temper head on. "Do you realize how many open quarantined zones stand between us and that storage unit? Too fucking many," he retorted, not giving Dean any time to answer. "Or what about looters? Monsters running off the leash with no hunters to regulate them? How about another band of cannibals, because *that* was fun. Or, hell, Dean—even Abaddon herself. She has demons posted *everywhere!* All up and down the east and west coasts, all over the countryside. How many hives have we found just in a hundred mile radius? I'm really glad this is all so black and white to you, Dean, or did you forget what happened the last time we tried to pull this off?"

Dean's callous stare inevitably went to the patch of cloth over Sam's right eye, a flicker of something akin to guilt buried there until it was replaced by malignant resolve. "Do I gotta repeat myself?" he began in a low, deceptively calm voice. It rose an instant later, transforming into a growl that would have made a lesser man quail. "It's *Abaddon, Sam! Take a look around you. The world is in the toilet!*"

Sam merely stared hopelessly at him, losing most of the fight he had, though not for reasons Dean would assume.

He wasn't afraid of his big brother, never really had been. He was afraid *for* him.

Sighing deeply and heavily, Sam looked at the one constant in his life while at the same time wondering just where the hell he had gone. "You're gonna get your best friend killed, and you don't even care. You're gonna get *yourself* killed, and you're gonna get *me* killed." The younger hunter shook his head, his voice quiet with unspoken accusation. "Which is a weird one-eighty, don't you think?"

Dean bristled at the incriminating overtones, a muscle working in his jaw. "Can we not?"

"Ignoring what you did doesn't make it go away, Dean."

"Really? Because if you stop talking about it, it's not there anymore."

Sam closed his eye, turning away in anger. "Damn it."

Dean spread his hands sardonically wide in response, conceding defeat for the moment. "Well, *lemme here it then*, Sammy."

Sam rounded on him, obvious hurt meshing with the resentment. "What, how *you lied to me*? It's not as if that isn't a recurring theme with you. I should at least be used to that."

"*I didn't have a choice!*"

"*I was ready to die, and you tricked me into being possessed by a fucking monster.*"

Dean rolled his eyes. "It was an *angel*, Sam. Cut the dramatics."

So was Lucifer. Lucifer possessed him. Ruby manipulated him. Azazel put his blood in him against his will. Dean either couldn't or wouldn't understand that—and yet he was the one who was *always* supposed to understand. They took everything from him that made him *Sam*, and free will was all he had left. The fact that Dean was blind to that was as devastating as it was unbelievable.

Cut the dramatics.

"Really?" Sam bit back, quelling the hurt he felt. "Because Cas says he's a monster."

"I don't give a shit what Cas said, it's beside the point," Dean argued scathingly. "I'll find Gadreel and I'll put the son of a bitch down myself. You don't have to worry about that. And you know what, how about you kiss my ass? I don't care if you were *ready* to die, it wasn't in me to *let you*. So you're damn right, I did what I did. I *saved you*. I may not think things all the way through, but what I do I do because it's the *right* thing. I'd do it again."

Sam grimaced, frustration boiling. "*And that is the problem*. This stuff *always* comes back to bite us, Dean. You *know* that!"

"Then we'll deal with it when it comes."

His brother shook his head in vehement rejection of such an attitude. "You say that now, but—"

"Yeah, and I'll say it again."

"Dean, *enough*. You *see*? *Even when you fuck up, you think what you're doing is worth it! Because you've convinced yourself you're doing more good than bad. But you're not!*"

Dean clenched his fists and his next words were harsh and angry again. "You know what, Sam, it *is* worth it because I'm lookin' at you in the face right now. You're alive. If that makes you hate me, so be it. I don't give a shit. *I'm poison*, and you've always known that, so deal with. *People get close to me, they get killed*. That's just how it is. *And you know what? I used to tell myself that I help more people than I hurt. That I was doing it all for the right reasons. I used to believe that*. Now, I just don't care, you're right about

that." Sam opened his mouth to object, but Dean barreled right over him. "Because putting Abaddon in the ground is *bigger* than *all* of us! I've got a camp full of twitchy trauma survivors out there with an *apocalypse* hanging over their heads! If I gotta feed some of them into a meat grinder to save the rest, then that's just how it is. It ain't pretty, but that's *war*."

Sam felt his righteous anger spill over out of pure desperation now. "These people count on you, they *trust* you—"

Dean stared back at him unflinchingly, and Sam thought it was like looking at a stranger. "They trust me to kill the Knight and to save the world. And that's exactly what I'm gonna do."

"No... no." Sam had no retort, much less a rebuttal to that. "Something's broken here, Dean. With *you*. With all of this. We just..." He gave a reluctant shake of his head, some of his own fortitude hanging like gossamer from his shoulders. "We don't see eye to eye anymore."

Dean's gaze was cold and flat, his voice carrying all the humanity of a dial tone. "Well, I still have both of mine. Maybe you lost some of your common sense when yours got taken."

Sam blew out a humorless, disbelieving laugh at the mordant dig. He looked away, searching for what he needed to say.

"Listen—"

"Goddamn it, I can't trust you, man. Don't you get it? I want to. I *do*. But *tricking me*? All this collateral damage you *don't* care about? I just can't. *Not the way I should be able to*." His words were frank, but no longer carried the anger and bitterness they had

before. Sam was *tired*. Exactly how much so was evident in the tense bow of his heavy shoulders, the worried arc of his brow, and the thin line of his mouth. "I want you to reconsider going through with this. If you don't...? *Yes*, I'll still go with you. And goddamn it, they will too, because we're all just as out of our fucking minds right now as you are. But..." Sam's eyes were pleading, "*just once. Be honest with me? Admit that you didn't save me for me. You did it for you.*"

Dean blinked, his scowl one of confusion. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"*You didn't want to be alone.* And you needed another soldier for this war. *It all boils down to the fact that you can't stand the thought of being alone. You're willing to do the sacrificing, as long as you're not the one being hurt.*"

His brother's reaction to that was predictably caustic. "*Alright, you wanna be honest, Sam? If the situation were reversed, and I was dying? You'd do the same damn thing.* And you *know* it. So don't think you can sit up on your high horse and point fingers at me, because it's not going to happen."

This was still his operation. This was still his call. If Sam didn't like it, tough shit. Being the boss never got anybody friends, and that was just how it was gonna be.

Sam's next words, however, knocked him back a step.

"*No, Dean. I wouldn't.*"

His brother stared at him, half in horror, which was ironic and sad.

Key

(All episodes are taken from *Supernatural*)

TEAL = “Good God, Y’All” Season 5 Episode 2

Written by Sera Gamble

Directed by Phil Sgriccia

YELLOW = “The End” Season 5 Episode 4

Written by Bed Edlund

Directed by Steve Boyum

PINK = “Road Trip” Season 9 Episode 10

Written by Andrew Dabb

Directed by Robert Singer

RED = “First Born” Season 9 Episode 11

Written by Robbie Thompson

Directed by John Badham

ORANGE = “Sharp Teeth” Season 9 Episode 12

Written by Adam Glass

Directed by Showalter, John

BLUE = “The Purge” Season 9 Episode 13

Written by Eric Charmelo and Nicole Snyder

Directed by Phil Scriggia

APPENDIX N—Fanart from the *Doctor Who* fandom



N.1 – ~~Fanart~~ representing the Modern *Doctor Who* fans’ passion for the Eleventh Doctor’s catchphrase “I wear bow ties now. Bow ties are cool”



N.2 – ~~Fanart~~ showing the Classic *Doctor Who* fans’ irked response to Eleventh Doctor’s catchphrase



N.3 – ~~Fanart~~ showing some *Doctor Who* fans’ use of Negotiation to identify and bridge the gap between the dissenting groups of fans

APPENDIX O—Fanart from SuperWhoLock

The dividing lines in superwholock

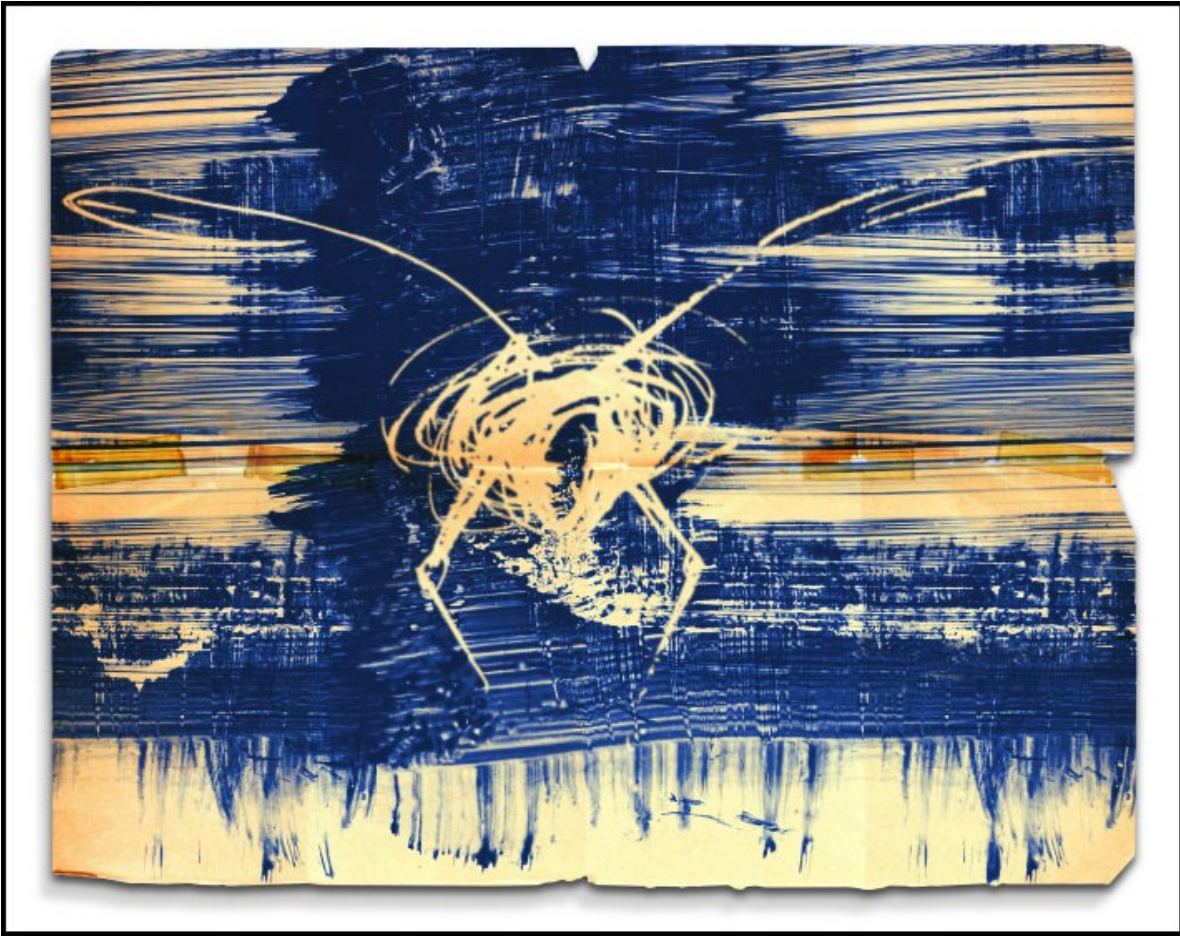
Doctor who: lets try to understand this beautiful misunderstood creature.

Sherlock: lets figure out this creepy bastard.

Supernatural: lets shoot this fugly son of a bitch.



APPENDIX P—Image used in *Test Subject Needed*



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ABSTRACT**MEMES, ARGS AND VIRAL VIDEOS: SPREADABLE MEDIA,
PARTICIPATORY CULTURE, AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY**

by

MARY KARCHER**December 2016****Advisor:** Dr. Frances Ranney**Major:** ENGLISH (Computers and Composition)**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

This project argues that spreadable media texts motivate people to engage in compositional activities advocated in First Year Composition (FYC). Drawing on Henry Jenkins' assertion that participatory culture offers potential for learning, I use his list of eleven participatory culture skills that he believed necessary for all students. After showing how well the Participatory Culture Abilities (PCAs) align with the WPA Outcomes Statement (WPA OS), I put forth the WPA OS and the PCAs combined as a lens through which to view three spreadable media case studies: Spreadable Media Events, Fan Labor, and Alternate Reality Games. Based on my findings, I conclude that we should incorporate Spreadable Media and Participatory Design pedagogy into the composition classroom, which will lead to innovative pedagogical practices that foster agency and engagement in students towards their writing. It will inform and facilitate the achievement of the Writing Program Administrators' outcomes; and it will support the learning of a set of participatory culture abilities that will help students to become conscious, responsible and empowered users of their rhetorical power in digital environments.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Mary Karcher graduated from University of Toledo, Toledo OH with a B.A in English Literature in 1994. She was a stay at home mother to her four children for seven years, until returning to college for her M.A in English Literature from the University of Toledo, which she completed in 2003. After moving to Michigan later that year she entered Wayne State University in Detroit, MI in the fall of 2004 as a doctoral student studying Computers and Composition. Since 2003, she has taught Composition classes at several universities and communities colleges, and continues to do so today.